

Doing Time

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/44945857) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/44945857>.

Rating:

[Explicit](#)

Archive Warning:

[Graphic Depictions Of Violence](#)

Category:

[M/M](#)

Fandom:

[Call of Duty \(Video Games\)](#)

Relationship:

[John "Soap" MacTavish/Simon "Ghost" Riley](#)

Character:

[Simon "Ghost" Riley, John "Soap" MacTavish](#)

Additional Tags:

[Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence](#), [Alternate Universe - Soulmates](#), [Alternate Universe - Prison](#), [Idiots in Love](#), [Possessive Behavior](#), [Love at First Sight](#), [Manipulation](#), [Dreams and Nightmares](#), [Past Child Abuse](#), [Homophobia](#), [Sexual Inexperience](#), [Dry Humping](#), [Barebacking](#), [Facials](#), [Blow Jobs](#), [Anal Sex](#), [Feral John "Soap" MacTavish](#), [Feral Simon "Ghost" Riley](#), [Porn with Feelings](#), [Angst with a Happy Ending](#), [Fluff and Smut](#), [Inmates are vile](#)

Language:

[English](#)

Stats:

Published: 2023-02-11 Completed: 2023-04-26 Words: 53,566
Chapters: 4/4

Doing Time

by [MildLimerence](#)

Summary

Soulmate AU: On leave from the 141, Soap lands himself in Strangeways prison, home to some of the worst criminals in the UK.

When his soulmark activates on the inside, Soap must contend with Ghost, an infamous soulmate-hating killer who seems intent on haunting his every move.

At least the lovely dreams of his pretty boy soulmate are keeping Soap's mind off his imminent demise at the hands of his sinister cellmate.

Notes

The soulmate lore is somewhat similar to Target Locked but also not, but there's no need to read that to understand this at all. Throw that knowledge (temporarily) in the bin if you have to.

I did an obscene amount of research into the UK prison system / even into this prison IRL, but I've also changed a lot of rules to suit my needs.

+

Shout out to Tildabeans for helping me out with true suffering 

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Going from Team 141 to a mixed category A & B maximum security prison was not the bright future Soap had envisioned for himself, but he couldn't say he didn't deserve it, all things considered.

It was an impressive feat of legal manoeuvring, courtesy of a lawyer provided on Laswell's recommendation, to convince the court to even place him as a lower risk Category B prisoner, rather than A, given what he'd done.

She'd badgered him to use a different lawyer specialising in soulmate defence law, but he'd baulked, insistent that he wouldn't use his mark as an excuse to escape the consequences of his actions.

Besides, it was hard to claim you were acting in defence of a soulmate when you'd never even met them.

+

HM Prison Manchester, or *Strangeways*, as the locals called it, was an impressive old Victorian redbrick fort - a miserable feat of architecture straight out of Dickensian England.

Soap could've almost mistaken it for a quaint English boarding school, had it not been for the ominous, multi-story bricked wall fences lined with razor-sharp barbed wire on all sides. Or the towering, sinister brick spire looming from the centre of the grounds, which was either a regular watchtower or the inspiration for Sauron's eye itself.

The intake process was quick and perfunctory, and he was stripped of all personal possessions and dignity in no time flat. The dehumanisation was so much like parts of military life, it almost felt like home.

Unlike the military, however, they did not seem at all interested by the faded, dormant soulmark on the palm of his left hand, and curiously did not note it down under his medical notes.

Soap had been allowed to bring some clothes and toiletries, but as a new prisoner he'd have to wear their standard issue clothing for the

first few weeks - grey jogging bottoms and a sweatshirt. He would stick out as a fresh meat amongst the more established inmates, which didn't bode well for his plan to keep his head down.

A no-nonsense, brown-skinned man addressed the new prisoners, his gaze steely as he spoke. The embroidery on his deep blue button up named him as Senior Prison Officer Sahan.

"The rules are simple - you are told the schedule, and you stick to it. After two weeks, you will be expected to start work full-time in the Croft, no exceptions." He paused, allowing the words to sink in. "Some of you have never held a job in your life, but this is a working prison, and you will earn your keep."

Soap stood at attention whilst the other prisoners shifted uneasily. He felt somewhat buoyed to know he wouldn't be wasting away idly in a cell, even if it would be mind-numbingly dull.

"First few weeks you'll wear the clothes provided, until such a time that you earn your personal belongings."

The oversized jumper itched around his throat as if in reminder.

"IEPs, or Incentive and Earned Privileges, should be self explanatory," he continued briskly. "As the name suggests, if you behave yourself, you'll be rewarded with certain privileges. If you behave poorly, these privileges will be revoked."

Soap couldn't begin to imagine what minor basic human rights they were dangling as a reward for good behaviour, and he wasn't sure he wanted to find out.

With his lecture complete, he called them all to him one-by-one, brandishing a clipboard and marking something down when they were done.

When Soap was called, he gave him a brief once over, expression blank.

"First offence?" Officer Sahan did not await his response, and scribbled something down. "I'll put you in with Ghost, then. He's also ex-military, very well-behaved. Perhaps you can learn something from him." With that, he was swiftly dismissed.

Not all in the military were made equal, especially another fellow criminal, so Soap wasn't exactly enthused by the news.

And what the fuck kind of name is Ghost?

+

Soap was carried along with the wave of new inmates, a group of grey and miserable felons being marched through their new home.

The internal brick prison walls were painted over by a soft cream colour, with all of the metal railings, accents and doors splashed by a bold Yves Klein blue.

Soap stuck to the fringes of the group, eyes roaming over the unfamiliar surroundings by rote, instinctively checking for entry and exit points.

His marked hand twitched nervously. *Pointless exercise, since the whole point is to keep you in.*

Soap was swept along in a dizzying whirlwind of group induction meetings and paperwork for the rest of the morning.

The rules and strict times and regulations were not dissimilar to the military, and if he blurred his mind's eye he could almost imagine he was in basic training again, not serving the first day of a 15 year prison sentence.

After a few hours, Soap was left to his own devices until the lunch bell. Well, as much as an inmate could be left to themselves. With nothing else to do, he opted to visit the tiny library adjacent to the Croft.

The Croft was the name for the general working space for all prisoners, housing a laundry, workshop, print shop, kitchen and waste management unit as well the mess hall, or Crofters restaurant, as it was lovingly referred to.

Soap sat in a corner with a random book he'd nabbed off the shelf, and ruminated, holding his marked hand close to his thigh.

His father had tried to instil shame into him for the soulmark, and Soap had taken to wearing it proudly uncovered on his palm for years in quiet protest. But a prisoner with a soulmark was a target, and he'd have to do his best to hide it.

It being a dull, faded grey would hopefully help.

Soap knew his lack of connection after so long had contributed to his particular uncharacteristic violence, and knew the conclusions others would draw if they knew about it. It was a rare phenomenon, where soulmates lost their minds and killed people, sometimes in self defence, but always taken to heightened extremes by their mark.

It was not unusual for one half of a pair to act out, to put themselves in harm's way or travel to strange places, all in the unconscious search for their undiscovered soulmate. They would find each other, no matter the cost.

A marked individual getting himself thrown in jail just to find his soulmate would indicate he was not typically a violent criminal type. Which he wasn't, not really, despite his former career and the horror he'd inflicted on his own father.

For the small percentage of people with soulmates in the world, it was common to find each other in early adulthood, if not younger. It was unheard of to enter your 30s without ever having found your soulmate, and indicated something worrying about the connection.

There were usually dogmatic campaigners who fought for soulmate rights, who argued they were misunderstood and should not be punished harshly for following their instincts. Others argued they were too dangerous to be given any leniency.

Soap had been deliberately suppressing himself and ignoring his instincts that screamed and begged for him to find his other half, but his father -

He deserved it anyway, Soap's mind hissed at him. *He wanted to-*

Not thinking about that. He cheerily slammed the door on that particular train of thought.

Unless he miraculously found his soulmate in prison, as much as it disgusted him, being known as a killer who'd served in the military would keep him from drawing too much unwanted attention.

As long as he didn't form a connection, he wouldn't become a target.

A shrill alarm startled him from his thoughts, and he hastily put his book away and headed for the halls.

The Crofters Restaurant was a prison mess hall, home to over a thousand inmates for lunch and dinner daily. The sheer mass and volume of so many men in one space would've been overwhelming in the best of circumstances.

Wearing clothes marking Soap as fresh meat made it so much worse.

"Got some more new fish, Boss?" One gent grunted at Sahan.

The officer ignored him, gesturing for the grey-clad group to line up and fend for themselves.

A snub nosed man limned with neck tattoos eyed Soap speculatively from his table. "Ey, up, 'ere comes trouble." His thick accent pinned him as a man from Yorkshire, and he scowled at Soap's stony silence. "What's up your arse you morn'gy bastard."

"Chew mah banger," Soap growled, increasing his pace to avoid further confrontation.

Play up the angry Scottish thing, Soap, he told himself wearily. Should've let Gaz win that bet and got myself more tats when I had the chance.

A dour-faced prisoner in a hairnet slapped a plastic tray compartmentalised into equally unappealing savoury goops, and Soap was soon creeping through the hall for a seat.

He considered sitting with his fellow newcomers, but they'd already filled a table, and Soap was left to find a spot for himself. A conspicuous table in the farthest corner of the room sat empty, the light overhead broken, lending it a dark and lonesome affect.

That'll do, then.

The adjacent tables watched him sit down with poorly concealed interest.

Why is this worse than school and basic combined? Soap grumbled.

Soap was only a few mouthfuls into his dubious meal when a shadow crossed his table. He blinked up at a towering man in all black, complete with an honest to god skull mask staring eerily down at him.

They told me we couldn't wear black, Soap thought dumbly, staring right back. He looked at the well-worn, skull face mask alarm. *Must be*

those special privileges they were talking about?

The bulging whites of his eyes looked blankly at him from behind the mask, and his heavy gaze elicited a truly impressive explosion of word vomit from Soap.

“Ah, hello,” he said, swallowing nervously. “Is this your table? I’m Soap.”

It took a moment for Soap to realise his own mistake.

Shit. He darted his eyes around. *Hope no one heard that.*

“Old callsign, sorry, old habits, please don’t call me that here,” he laughed nervously, scratching his neck. “I’m John, but there’s probably a load of those around here, so you can call me MacTavish if you want.”

The other man said nothing, merely placing his tray down and sitting in the chair furthest from him.

Roger that, then, Soap thought grumpily, picking at his food. *Rude.*

Before the grating bell rang again, an officer collected him alongside the other fresh meat, and delivered them all individually to their own cells. Soap was the last on the list, and the officer in charge was clearly ready to be done with them all at that point.

His wing was a long, double-storied atrium, with cells joined by blue railed landings on either side. His own cell was at the very end of the wing, adjacent to an exterior wall, with the light in the hall flickering ominously, leaving the section periodically in complete darkness.

When they finally reached his cell door, the mousy-haired Officer Figs turned to him and swiftly recited, “Lock up is at 9pm, and cells open again at 8am. Lunch is at 1pm, and tea is at 7:30pm.”

Soap listened to it all intently, absently trailing his thumb against the mark on his palm.

“You’ll have mandatory one-on-ones with Officer Sahan every week, and visitation can be booked by friends and family online. There’s a phone in your cell that you can use to call pre-approved numbers, but it will take a few days for security to clear your contacts.”

With that, she unlocked the cell door, and motioned him along. His

rear had barely cleared the door frame before the metal door was slammed loudly on his back.

+

The narrow old cell was similarly cream coloured, with a tiny grated window on the far end, a metal framed bunk bed to the side, and open shelves lining the opposite wall. A toilet and tiny sink sat beneath the window, with a metal partition providing a modicum of privacy, much to Soap's surprise.

A huge, hulking figure in black sat on the top bunk, knees folded with his arms in his lap. His masked head turned slowly to him upon his entry.

The silent man dressed in Halloween gear from earlier.

You're Ghost?

"Ah, hello again," Soap said, clearing his throat. "Must be Ghost, then?"

Ghost blinked, and continued his long, silent stare.

Soap was usually quite personable, but prison was proving to be a challenge for him thus far. *Help me out here, for fuck's sake.*

"So uh, what's with the whole..." He twirled his finger in a circle around his own face, before trailing off.

The other man said nothing, and merely stared silently while Soap continued to dig his own mortifying grave.

He was this close to asking, 'Come here often?', before he gave up entirely.

"Look, not sure what good prison etiquette amongst cellmates is - suppose it's a bit like basic. I'll just leave you alone and stop talking, shall I?"

Cold silence.

Soap wondered if it was a good idea to admit that he wasn't an experienced, hardened criminal, like the other man clearly was. But given his nervous ramblings, that was likely quite evident for all to see.

Not like I'm not fully capable of handling myself, he thought mulishly. *Just not particularly violent. Most of the time.*

The masked man's blackened gaze was sending a strange trill of awareness down his spine, and Soap decided he'd endured more than enough time under it.

"Aye, good chat, I'll just take the bottom bunk, then." With that, he deposited his tiny plastic bag of personal belongings onto an open spot on the shelf, kicked off his flip flops, and threw himself onto the thin mattress.

It was only a few minutes before the cells were sent into complete darkness, the lights automatically shutting off across the entire wing.

The flickering light in the hall cast odd, long shadows across the space through the grated window in the door, and Soap had a strange fear that the man's head would creepily inch over the top bunk and continue staring eerily at him if he dared to close his eyes.

+

Soap spent his first night in prison wide awake, staring at the underside of the top bunk, a yawning horror growing wide in his insides. He was gripped by a strange sickening feeling, and eventually turned and huddled with his back to the wall, staring sightlessly into the flickering dark.

He shivered under his thin blanket, heart hammering as he held off the waves of nausea that rocked him.

What the fuck is wrong with me? He scrubbed at his sweaty temples, biting his tongue to stop his teeth chattering.

He only hoped his restless tossing and turning wouldn't disturb his unsettling roommate. But given his lack of reaction to anything, maybe he had nothing to fear.

Soap wasn't one for homesickness, and even though he didn't necessarily want to be imprisoned, he sincerely felt he deserved to be there. So the reason behind the churning dread in his guts was truly a mystery to him.

Soap half dozed until the morning light, lightly tracing his marked palm until the lights suddenly switched back on overhead. By then he was a complete wreck, stomach in snarls and vision unfocused from

lack of sleep.

They'd conveniently forgotten to mention that breakfast was not held in the mess, but collected at tea time the night prior, to be eaten in the cells the next day. He listened to the quiet sounds of Ghost eating above him, and briefly wondered if he wouldn't mind sharing.

He didn't feel brave enough to ask, given his stony silence yesterday, and quietly laid in his bunk waiting for the cells to unlock.

Wonder if he takes that thing off to eat?

When the doors clicked open, Soap staggered out of his bunk, fumbling on the floor for his shoes. The other man was still in the same position, staring as he clumsily bumbled around in their space.

"MacTavish," an officer's voice boomed from the doorway. "With me, now."

"Right then, see you at lunch," He said with forced cheer, looking up at the masked man with a smile. "Save you a seat." He considered giving his shoulder a friendly fist bump, but took one look at his blank, hollow gaze and decided against it.

You're going to get yourself killed, Soap, he thought wearily, following after the officer. *Not gonna last a week here.*

+

Soap's middling experience with prison only worsened as the next day progressed. Since he wouldn't be made to start working for two weeks, he had nothing but - heavily restricted - time to kill.

Sleep deprived and brain terribly fogged, he didn't notice the sinister group following him until he found himself alone in an empty white corridor, conspicuously absent of any guards.

Bleeding Christ, he thought worriedly, slowly turning.

The snub-nosed Yorkshire man from yesterday sauntered up close, flanked by two shorter men, their multitude of tattoos seeming to make up for the lack of brains behind their eyes.

Yorkshire and the Puddings, Soap thought absently. *Terrible band name.*

"Now then, daft lad," Yorkshire greeted good-naturedly. "Off to a rocky start yesterday, but figured since you're new, we'd give you a

lesson.” He looked at his cronies with a smirk. “Free of charge.”

Soap should’ve been more worried by this development, but he noted the opportunity with a gleam. The chance to cement himself as something other than a new, easy mark had fallen right into his lap, and he wasn’t going to let it slip away from him.

He drifted slowly backwards, eyeing their approach cautiously. “What lesson is that, then?”

“Respect, learning your place.” Yorkshire smiled widely, and a silver filling flashed gaudily in his mouth.

“Aye, is that right?” Soap asked blandly, sizing up the three and clenching his fists surreptitiously. “Live in a prison, so no other place I can go to.”

Yorkshire did not seem overly impressed with his lip, or his total absence of fear. “Keep going with your cheek, and I’ll lamp ya.”

“Weren’t you planning on that anywa -”

Soap would blame the sleep deprivation for not ducking in time.
Embarrassing.

Yorkshire slugged him hard in the jaw, and Soap staggered back, shaking the haze from his brain. *Ow.*

The other two were circling, and Soap’s marked hand twitched. He felt the familiar blackness rising in him, the same that had suffused him when he committed patricide -

Hell’s bells, tone it down. He shook the black from his eyes, crashing back down to reality. *You don’t need to prove yourself that much.*

Soap may have been shorter than two of them, but he more than made up for it with raw, physical strength. And professional training.

Grappling one of the Puddings, Soap quickly jabbed him in the solar plexus and kicked his ankles out, sending him tumbling heavily to the concrete. When the other Pudding sent a punch, he floated under it, using the other man’s momentum against him to throw him bodily over his shoulder. There was a crunch, and Soap suspected they might’ve broken something on the way down.

With both Puddings quickly down for the count, he turned to

Yorkshire with a wild grin.

“Where tha fuck did ya learn all that?” He grunted warily, taking a step back.

“Military,” Soap said cheerily, taking a deliberate step closer. “Care to dance?”

Yorkshire didn’t seem keen on dancing with Soap, and spat on the floor between them. “Hmph,” he grunted. “Chuff off, then.”

One of the Puddings moaned piteously on the floor.

“Quit yer ruering, Kev,” Yorkshire muttered, kneeling down to prod at him and dismissing Soap, keeping a wary eye on him as he descended.

Sensing victory, Soap rolled his eyes and turned to walk away, but froze at the dark figure shadowing the end of the hall.

Ghost stood in the centre of the walkway, head tilted in consideration. He drifted his eyes from the men on the floor to Soap, and gave him a gentle blink.

Shit, a witness. He shook his tingling hand, flustered. *How much did you see?*

He suspected snitching was largely frowned upon in prison, but Ghost was supposedly well-liked by the staff for a reason.

Will you tell anyone?

The alarm for lunch blared, and Soap jolted, before moving tentatively towards him. When he was within passing distance, he was astonished when the man turned and fell into step with him.

Soap brushed his thumb subtly against his mark, eyes darting between Ghost and his path nervously as they walked towards the mess hall. A wave of nausea sliced his stomach, and he grimaced miserably.

Sick and in a fist fight in the first week, he thought wearily. *Doesn’t bode well.*

+

With nowhere else to go, Soap sat himself down at what he assumed was Ghost’s table again, deciding the silent spectre was the best

comrade he was likely going to get.

Ghost sat a few chairs closer to him, Soap noted with a small thrill.

Progress.

The other man pulled his mask up to his nostrils, and Soap looked away sheepishly, feeling as though he was intruding on something private, despite sitting in a room with over a thousand men.

Lonely and bored out of his mind, Soap decided that if Ghost had willingly followed and sat with him, he would just have to endure listening to him. He hadn't had to be this silent in years, and felt a creeping anxiety bubbling at the idea that he would have to go back to that subdued state again.

He's dead, he's dead, he assured himself bleakly. *Just a more literal prison to deal with now.*

"So," Soap leaned his elbow against the table, cheered when the other man turned his head slightly towards him. "Come here often?"

Ghost rolled his eyes, and Soap grinned, victorious.

So there is someone in there, after all.

+

Sleep deprived and sick to his stomach, Soap fell asleep the moment his head touched his threadbare pillow.

He found himself in a quiet room, a clock ticking loudly on the pale walls. The man looked at him over his spectacles for a moment, before he typed something on his keyboard, the screen's display mirrored in his eyewear.

"It is rare," he said, pausing as he read over what he typed. "But it is most likely."

More clacking of keys.

"They are suppressing the connection, so it'll be up to them to seek you out."

He clenched his marked hand tightly, grief clawing at his throat.

"If it has not happened by now, it likely never will."

Gasping violently awake, Soap shivered as he mopped the sweat from his brow, blinking in confusion. He sat in his bed for a long while, wondering at his odd dreams.

It had felt almost like a memory, but the people and setting were entirely unfamiliar to him. The emotions were vivid and raw, but Soap was sure he'd never been in that room in his life.

What the hell was that about?

A cool, grey light filtered into the cell, and the sound of quiet eating above him told him it was morning. He slapped his forehead, emitting a quiet groan.

Forgot to pick up breakfast again. He flailed and flopped his head onto his pillow in dramatic disappointment, frowning when his shoulder hit something foreign. He blindly grasped at it, curling his fingers around the weighty cube and staring at his bounty blankly.

A milk carton?

Soap's eyes darted to the underside of the mattress, heart picking up speed.

There's no way he accidentally dropped that, he thought slowly.

"Did you not want this?" He called out tentatively. Ghost continued chewing and ignoring him, so Soap shrugged and shoved the straw in.

Did you leave this for me?

The thought warmed him to the core.

+

Soap shut the book he was reading with a loud thud, wincing when the prison librarian hissed at him.

Heart racing, he raked a hand through his hair, resisting the urge to tug on it.

Don't panic, he begged himself.

What do you mean don't panic? He berated himself, scrubbing his hands over his face. *Your fucking mark is activating, after all this time.*

Soap gulped, rubbing his pounding temple.

He'd dismissed the symptoms of his mysterious illness, but the dreams had been hard to deny. As was the book on soulmate connections he'd just slammed closed.

He'd spent most of his life resisting the urge to find his soulmate, denying his base nature - not because he didn't want to find them, Christ he'd wanted it so desperately, but because -

Because.

He's dead now, he soothed inwardly. *You're allowed to want it.*

He glanced quickly at his scarred palm, before hiding it uneasily against his abdomen.

It was still the dark, spindly, lightning bolt that ran a ragged line across his palm, textured by years worth of scars. The unfamiliar silvery hue undulating beneath the surface of his skin was some cause for alarm, though.

Soap wasn't sure how much time he'd have before the thing was activated fully, but he knew he'd have to get it covered up as soon as possible. Without access to his personal clothing, he'd have to improvise some sort of temporary covering.

The activation was a visually loud and obvious thing, and he'd be incredibly vulnerable if it happened in front of any group of people, let alone his current questionable peers.

You should be fine, he assured himself. *Might be a few days before anything happens.*

When he rose out of one of the many dilapidated library armchairs, he scrunched his nose as he caught a whiff of himself.

Definitely need a wash, first.

+

With a spare pair of prison sweats, flip flops, toiletries and towel on hand, Soap marched determinedly towards his wing's showers.

Soap was used to communal showering, but the idea of being so vulnerable amongst the prison population made his skin itch nervously.

The shower area had no door, but a tiled hallway that twisted in on

itself, much like a public bathroom. Despite it being a free time period for most prisoners, he was bemused by the surprising lack of people in the area, save for a few guards down the hall.

When he neared, he spotted the handwritten sign on the tiled wall and scoffed.

Occupied, 15 minutes - Gh.

It's a prison. His mind swirled, incredulous. *Who the hell do they think they are?*

Soap tentatively entered and popped his head in, roving his eyes around the space. As suspected, there was not a hoard of sweaty, disgusting men milling about the space, but only blessed emptiness.

There were several half walled cubicle showers lining one wall, and a few fully curtained showers lining the opposite side. There was no sign of the bathroom's exclusive occupant, so Soap shrugged and headed for the nearest cubical.

He quickly placed his things on a precarious ledge at the entry point of his cubicle and swung the door shut. When the hot, steamy spray rained down on his filthy skin, he couldn't help but release a deep, blissful breath at the feeling.

Once he was thoroughly cleaned, he was idly debating finishing up when his soulmark gave a low, deep throb, sending pleasure and heat down his spine. Shivering, his blood rushed southward, filling his heavy, thickening cock.

Is that your doing? He blinked down at his marked hand, then his straining prick. *Just a quick one, then, while I'm alone.*

It wasn't his first sneaky wank in a communal shower, but the moment he wrapped his fingers around himself, he knew he was in for a decidedly different experience.

His mark sparked a frisson of satisfaction the moment he began stroking, and between his ministrations and the foreign sparks of pleasure, he was swiftly locked in an intoxicating feedback loop of lust.

The humid steam, and the water running down his body added to the sinful warmth in his blood, and the glide of his flesh made for a lewd slapping sound with every pass. Stroking faster and tighter, he rocked

his hips into his fist, groaning involuntarily as another flush of pleasure twisted his insides.

He bit his lip, breathless and dazed. *Really hope no one walks in.*

There was a flash of flaxen locks, and a warm, heavy stare in his mind, and then he was coming hard and fast, slapping a hand to his mouth to muffle his surprised moans.

He shuddered, stroking himself through the fading waves of his climax. *What the fuck.*

Cleaning himself quickly once more, he rubbed at his brow, the faint embarrassment at his sudden orgasm overwhelmed by the deep, heady satisfaction in his core.

Soap was so dazed and muddled, it took him far longer than it should've to sense eyes on the back of his neck.

Slowly turning his head, he let out a surprised, high noise.

Ghost.

Standing outside of his cubicle, staring openly at him.

“Bleedin’ Jesus, Ghost,” he wheezed, gaping. “Dya’ mind?”

How long have you been there? He wanted to demand, but he wasn’t sure he could cope with the answer. *I would’ve noticed if you were here earlier.*

I hope.

Ghost’s lidded gaze roved over his exposed shoulders for a moment, before they slid back up. He slowly lifted his hand, displaying that idiotic ‘occupied’ sign for his perusal.

Of course, Soap thought with faint dismay. *Are you above every bloody rule in this prison?*

“Are you a teacher’s pet then, Ghost,” he snickered, unable to help himself. Water continued to pelt his face, and he shook it from his eyes. “How have you managed all this?”

The other man looked away and back before shrugging, lowering the paper to his side.

Soap twisted his lip in consideration. Despite almost being caught red handed with his hand on his prick, it had been a pleasantly surprising shower experience, as far as prisons went.

Wouldn't hurt to ask.

"Could I shower when you've got your sign up?" he asked boldly, spinning the taps closed. "If I leave you alone, you won't even know I'm here."

The speculative, intrigued tilt of his head was a promising sign.

Ghost gave a slow nod, his gaze a heavy weight across his skin. Soap couldn't help the surprised grin that crossed his face, and Ghost's eyes shuttered, flicking down to his mouth and back in an instant.

Bizarre man, Soap thought, but he wasn't at all bothered by the odd fondness that accompanied the thought.

The masked man wandered out of the showers, his towel and little sign in hand, and Soap quickly towelled and clothed himself in his dreary sweats once more. When he stepped out into the halls, he stopped in his tracks.

Ghost lifted his head, arms crossed from where he leant against the opposing wall.

Soap stared, mind whirling.

Were you waiting for me?

Oddly embarrassed, he tentatively walked towards their cell's landing, a little thrill shooting up his spine when the other man joined his side.

At least one thing's going right, he thought, wistfully brushing his scarred palm. *Made my first prison friend.*

+

Soap's dreams that night were a hazy swirl of frustrated longing, the thoughts potent yet decidedly not his own.

'What have I done wrong?' Someone raged, a tremulous longing underpinning his desperation. *'You should be here by now.'*

A shudder, and a choked breath. A pain lit a fire in his marked right hand

- 'the wrong one', Soap thought dazedly - and he cradled his aching temples.

'I'll be so good to you,' he promised, the thought small and sweet with gentle promise. 'I know you feel it too, so why are you fightin-'

Soap blinked awake, cringing at the pounding in his head.

Faster than the book said, he thought nervously. Dreaming of my soulmate already?

The thought was disturbing and thrilling in equal measure.

My soulmate, he wondered hesitantly.

Soap had spent most of his life resisting the pull, and had never expected to find them after all this time, especially not in prison.

There'd been one moment when he'd allowed himself to follow it, but when he'd arrived on base, they were nowhere to be found. He'd been intent to close himself off for good, after that.

The heavy longing and frustration at Soap's denial of their natural instincts struck him, and guilt curdled his stomach.

I don't think you'll ever be able to understand why, he thought quietly, staring at his trembling, mangled palm.

+

Soap was making his way to Crofters mess hall, when a weedy, bespectacled man in bright casual wear sidled up to him. Soap looked down at his auburn hair with a blink.

"Ethan," his soft Welsh accent floated through the air. "Explosives and general anarchy."

It took a moment for him to catch on to his meaning, as Ethan smirked up at him expectantly

"Soa-" he faltered, remembering where he was.

Can't call yourself fucking Soap in prison, you bloody bampot.

"John MacTavish," he said reluctantly, looking away. "Killed someone."

Did more than just kill someone, didn't you? He thought sullenly.

"Gym rat, then, MacTavish?" Ethan asked, eyeing his muscled bulk with a considering gleam. "You're *hench*."

Looking at his scheming face, Soap wondered if his little tango with Yorkshire had done the rounds as intended. He wasn't sure if he was being checked out for aesthetics, or potential bodyguard duty, and while he wasn't interested in either option, he answered truthfully anyway.

"Ex-military," he said absently.

"Military, huh? Just a grunt or?"

"Spec ops, worked in counter-terrorism, mostly." He watched the man's eye twitch with vague amusement. He wondered if it was the best approach to needle a relatively friendly face, when his position in the food chain was so up in the air.

But he'd seen the carnage explosives could inflict, especially on civilians, and decided he wasn't in the mood to be charitable.

He quickly recovered, much to Soap's irritation. "So you're in for killing a guy," he said snidely, "Isn't that your job, state sanctioned killing?"

The explosive anarchist isn't a fan of my former employer, I take it.

Soap clenched his fist. "Aye, well, it wasn't an authorised target." *Obviously.*

He thought that was the end of that, but the man kept talking.

"The nosh at Crofters isn't too bad, it changes every week, but it repeats after a month so," Ethan clicked his teeth. "Gets repetitive after a while."

Soap said nothing, and the two drifted slowly along with the other groups of inmates, the halls full to bursting with men shambling towards one location.

When Ethan warned him about staying away from the Graveyard, Soap looked at him incredulously. The other man lectured eagerly, and Soap quickly realised he knew exactly what he was referring to.

The Graveyard was a long, white corridor that led to the ageing

Victorian ventilation spire that anchored the prison, and was so called because many prisoners had been led to their deaths there over the last century. A crippling shortage of staff and funding meant the hall was never fitted with either bodies or cameras, and the more violent population gleefully took advantage of the blindspot.

Soap had already gotten into a fight with Yorkshire and the Puddings at the very spot on his second day, but he wasn't about to mention that to Ethan.

"Who's your padmate, then?" Ethan's lilting accent floated through the air, head cocked at him curiously.

Soap stared at him, nonplussed.

"Your *cellmate*."

Oh. "Ah, Sahan said his name was Ghost?"

Ethan's eyebrows flew up. "Oh, he's alright then. He's only been here a few months, but should leave you alone, always keeps to himself," he rambled aimlessly, and Soap gobbled up the information eagerly. "Gets to keep his mask for being well behaved. Should be a good cellie for a fish like yourself."

Soap debated even asking, before Ethan looked at him blandly and supplied, "A fish is a first-timer like yourself, MacTavish."

Embarrassed, Soap cleared his throat. "He's very quiet. What's he in for?"

Shocked, Ethan almost stopped dead in his tracks, until someone shoved him roughly in irritation.

"You don't know? It was all over the news for ages."

Irritated, Soap's lips turned down. "No, was on active duty. Never heard much local news."

"Oh, it wasn't just local," Ethan said eagerly, face animated as he leaned in. "It was international, too."

Intrigued, Soap listened while the hairs on his nape stood on end.

"He killed a couple in their home, all without a trace. Snuck in, knifed them, and disappeared without leaving any evidence. Probably why they call him Ghost." Ethan smirked. "He turned himself in pretty

soon after, not sure why though, they never would've caught him otherwise."

"That made international news?" Soap asked thoughtlessly, then flushed at his own callousness.

Ethan rolled his eyes. "Yes, if you'll let me finish..." he trailed off, snagging a plastic tray as they queued in line. "It was the people he killed - they were soulmates, well known in their community - so you can see why it made the news, right?"

Soap felt his stomach plummet, the grip on his own tray loosening as they shuffled slowly through the queue.

Soulmates, rare though they were, were borderline revered and reviled in equal measure. Tensions between normal and marked people were at boiling point, with some demanding special rights for marked individuals, and others arguing they should be separated from society entirely due to their potential violent nature.

He'd grown used to being hated by his own father for the mark on his hand, so finding out Ghost was the same shouldn't have phased him. They were all in here for some nefarious reason, and there were bound to be people who hated soulmarked people amongst them.

And yet, he couldn't shake the creeping chill of betrayal that washed over him.

He's not your friend, Soap, he berated himself, chest tightening painfully. *If he knew what you were, who knows what he'd do.*

The man's oddly thoughtful gestures floated through his mind, and he shook them away.

How did I get lumped with the one bloke with a specific grudge against my kind, Soap thought, hysteria twisting up his insides.

Unaware of Soap's panic, Ethan continued blithely.

"I lied about the name, he's only really called Ghost here," he said thoughtfully. "Think the news called him The Soulmate Killer - which is a bit much, since it was just one couple, but..."

Soap ignored him, clutching his trembling hand to his side.

Can't let him see it, he whispered quietly to himself. *Can't let anyone see*

it.

"Shouldn't he be in Cat A, then, if he's killed so many people," Soap hissed, heart racing. "Why's he down in B with us?"

Hypocrite, a voice chided him. *You shouldn't be down here either.*

Ethan shrugged, disinterested. "He's ex-military like you, never puts a toe out of line, and the staff love him for it." He smiled even as a mixed plate of unappealing rice and slop was deposited onto his tray. "I wouldn't worry about it, doubt he'd care about you unless you were marked."

Soap clenched his marked hand into a tight fist around the plastic.

Bleeding fuckin' Jesus, Mary and Joseph, he thought, slightly delirious as he watched a fellow prisoner slap a plastic parcel onto Soap's tray. *I'm going to be found dead in my cell before the week is out.*

Sweating profusely, he followed after Ethan as he manoeuvred around the hundreds of tables in search for their own spot.

Is it suspicious if I don't sit with him now?

It's fine, I can keep it hidden, he assured himself, shuddering from chills and watching his own feet as he quietly panicked.

In a cavernous room of over a thousand men, he sensed one heavy pair of eyes on him, and looked up.

Soap's eyes drifted over to the masked man sitting in a dark corner, the luminous whites of his eyes clear to him despite the vast distance between them.

Ghost.

The world as he knew it seemed to slow. The prisoners whooping and laughing around him crawled in a dreamy blur, the sound dulled to a distant warble as he stared unseeingly back.

A bolt of lightning ignited deep inside his left palm, and he dropped his laden tray with an agonised cry. The food clattered loudly to the floor, and the world resumed its chaotic motion.

Already ? He gaped.

Soap watched in horror as a blinding flash of light beamed from his

hand, casting the room in a dazzling silvery light for one, mesmerising moment, before sucking back into his hand with a painful jerk.

The cacophony of noise quietened to a low, surprised murmur as thousands of eyeballs swivelled towards Soap.

No, no, no, he whispered internally, staring hugely at the silvery lines swirling cheerfully beneath his skin.

“Oi, oi, is that a soulmark you’ve got there?” Yorkshire bellowed from across the way, and a roar of energised chatter erupted. “Looks like we got a live one, lads.”

This can’t be happening.

“Didya get yourself locked up to find your true love, pet,” a voice mocked in a cloying sing-song.

Soap flinched, slowly curling his fingers over his mark in resignation.

“Come here pretty boy, I’ll keep you warm for ya soulmate.” Someone pawed at his arm, and he staggered back, snarling. “Break you in for ‘em, look a bit uptight.”

Another man piped up, and hit the final nail in the coffin, “Oh, Ghost is gonna love you.”

He looked blearily up at Ghost, and the man himself was staring unerringly back, his gloved hand trembling tightly around his plastic knife. He slowly stood, eyes fixed on Soap, and something crumpled in his chest at the threatening sight.

I’m dead, he thought with quiet certainty.

From his periphery, two officers flanking the walls moved cautiously towards Soap, calling for calm as the men leered and jeered at him.

He looked past his hand at the slop smeared across the floor, and distantly wondered if they were coming to make him clean it up.

“MacTavish,” Officer Sahan murmured, and Soap gazed blankly at his terrifying, sympathetic expression.

Don’t look at me like that, he thought weakly. *Look angry, bored, anything but that.*

He gestured for him to follow, and Soap slowly shambled after him,

stepping around the occasional ankle that tried to trip him on his way out.

Soap could feel Ghost's leaden stare crawling over his back as he was led away, heart thudding weakly in his chest.

+

Inside of Sahan's powder blue office, Soap sat across from his pristine desk and quietly lost his hold on the vestiges of his sanity.

"We could put you in the Vulnerable Persons Unit," Sahan offered wearily, the dehumanising barrier between prisoner and officer eroding as he puzzled out a solution to such a spectacularly unique situation.

"Where all the sex offenders are?" Soap laughed bitterly, pinching the bridge of his nose painfully. "Don't marked people get attacked there too?"

He knew with certainty that they did, because he'd spent an ungodly amount of time anxiously googling this exact scenario before he'd arrived. Soap would have to risk being violated and murdered either with the mainstream prison population or inside the VPU.

Until he found his soulmate and closed the bond, his soul was wide open for anyone to interfere with.

His jagged, lightning bolt mark had been cracked wide open, more of a silver chasm than a small line now, and he wouldn't be able to close it.

Not until his soulmate did it for him.

Soap looked at Sahan, eyes wild. "If anyone that's not my soulmate touches this," he said slowly, waving his palm in his direction. "My soul could be damaged, and I won't be able to complete the bond."

"We'll get you some gloves," Sahan said, staring at the mark in wary fascination. "Can keep you nearby tomorrow during intake, but we can't babysit you forever."

He thought of his limited knowledge of Ghost's crimes, and wondered if being knifed wouldn't be worse than being victimised in the other ways he was bound to be in another cell.

Soap could feel the noose on his neck tightening inescapably, regardless of his illusion of choice.

“I’ll be honest with you, MacTavish,” he muttered, clasping his hands together. “We’re overcrowded as it is, and I have nowhere else to put you.”

An idea fell out of his mouth before he could hold it in. “Could you not swap me permanently with someone else.” Soap tried and failed to keep the plea out of his tone.

Sahan remained stone faced. “I can’t force anyone to swap cells, as the risk would be perceived as equally high for anyone else.”

They were soulmate related though? He raged, and Sahan smiled humorlessly.

“That’s the way a crafty lawyer will see it, even though we suspect it was targeted for your kind,” he said knowingly. “And I cannot move him up to Cat A when he’s done nothing wrong.”

Sahan leaned back with a slight shrug of his shoulders, as if to say, ‘My hands are tied.’

And I’m in serious shit.

+

Once the lockdown alarm chimed, Sahan procured some frayed old woollen gloves from the commissary, and soon he was being escorted back to his cell.

Where Ghost will be.

When Soap arrived, Ghost was a still lump under the sheets, his back turned to him.

Soap stood, quietly confused. He’d tied himself into an anxious knot on the journey there, expecting an altercation, an attack, or at the very least just an eerie stare as he walked in.

The cell door slammed loudly behind him, and the man stirred slightly, but still didn’t turn.

Heart racing, he approached the bed, watching closely for any signs of movement, but there was nothing. He kept a wary eye on him as he slipped his shoes off, not stopping until he had to duck down into his

own bunk.

Shivering and miserable, he clutched his newly gloved hand to his chest, huddled against the wall. He stayed awake for several hours, anxiously awaiting a late night attack, but the man above him remained as he was.

When his eyelids drooped, he tried to shake himself awake, but eventually he was swept away, a quiet hope burning inside.

I hope I get to finally meet you.

+

Soap was on his back, head rested on a warm pillow, his wrist cradled in someone's grasp. He sighed blissfully, feeling sleepy but more himself than he had in a long time.

He opened his eyes, and knew immediately that he was dreaming.

A curious, lidded gaze peered down at him, brows obscured by messy flaxen locks.

I know you, he thought blearily. The memory of his recent illicit shower activities drifted through his mind, and the other man's lips curled into a slow, pleased smirk.

Oh fuck. He froze. *You can hear my thoughts.*

"Just bits and pieces." His voice was deeper than he expected, the dark timbre of it curling pleasantly around his ears. "It'll be more when this is dealt with." He nodded at Soap's hand held in his own larger ones, thumb stroking over the scarred flesh.

Soap quickly realised that his pillow was in fact the man's knee, and shot up, almost knocking into his chin clumsily. Head spinning, he started to fall, but was caught easily in the man's arms.

Strong, he noted dopily, as he was settled back down, this time into his lap. *Warm.*

"Your exposed soul is weakening you," he said matter of factly. "You're not used to being the one deprived."

Soap frowned at the deceptive lightness in his tone. *And you are?*

He smiled meaningfully, stroking his palm. "You hid from me for a

long time.”

Guilt suffused him, and he made to pull his hand away, but the man held fast. “Don’t run now, Johnny,” he tutted softly. “Only just caught you.”

Flustered, Soap frowned up at him. “Caught me?” he spluttered. And then his brain caught up. “*Johnny?*”

“I’m Simon,” he offered with a shameless smirk. “I could call you Soap, if you like.”

Soap startled as Simon’s voice trickled into his brain, *Know too many Johns, want something just for me.*

Soap thought about it for a moment, but decided he quite liked the fond way it sounded curled inside his mouth. “I don’t mind.”

Giving in so easily, he thought distantly, but the pleased smile aimed his way distracted him instantly.

“Waited so long for you,” he murmured, eyes darkening as they searched his face. “Did you feel compelled to find me, now that I’m in prison, Johnny?”

He’d been able to ignore the urges with some difficulty over the past few years, although he’d sensed the other man was regularly in great danger. But in the lead up to Soap’s own arrest, it was a constant, undeniable battle.

The aching nightmares, the excruciating pain that plagued him the moment he went on leave, *he needs me, he needs me, he nee -*

“Shh,” Simon hushed, stroking his palm across his forehead. His eyes were soft, but his words were a gentle poison, “Did well, bringing yourself to me. Everything will be easier now.”

Soap laughed weakly, pressing eagerly into his touch. “In bloody prison?”

Simon’s eyes darkened, a terrible, fathomless void stretching deep into the depths of his own heart.

“It makes no difference for me, being in here or out there,” he said quietly, looking at Soap meaningfully. “Haven’t ever felt free until now, anyway.”

Soap could feel his own eyes widening, astonished at his sincerity. He could feel Simon's satisfaction and hope, and a cracking, aching inky darkness swirling within.

"I can feel you," Soap said, awed.

The little, honest smile twisted something gently in his own chest. Simon moved his hand from his forehead to his cheek, stroking his cheekbone. "You can have all of it," he said earnestly.

His thoughts and his emotions, and above all his silvery soul, peaking out through his opposing palm.

It was a lot to offer, when they'd only just met, but he knew Simon meant it wholeheartedly. And the aching sense of rightness within himself told him all he needed to know.

So it is you, he acknowledged in his own mind. "You're -"

"Your soulmate," Simon murmured,

"- so pretty," Soap said.

Well, that wasn't exactly what he'd meant to say, but it had just slipped out.

Simon's startled, pinkening cheekbones removed any regret he might've felt for his carelessness.

"How come I've never seen you, I would've thought this wouldn't have played up unless I had," Soap said quickly, wiggling his fingers in Simon's grasp.

He blinked slowly. "It was fast, wasn't it." He sounded inordinately pleased, stroking around the edges of his mark again. "Should've taken weeks, yet your soul opened so easily the moment you arrived."

Soap spluttered, embarrassed and pinned by his knowing gaze. "Couldn't just be me, could it," he insisted, trying to raise himself but being gently pressed back down. "Takes two and all."

He felt like he'd walked into a trap, when Simon's deep, toe curling satisfaction slithered through his veins.

"You're right," he said huskily. "It's just nice to know you're as desperate for me as I am for you, after all this time."

Christ, he thought, staring into his warm, blackened eyes.

“So where are you then?” Soap asked boldly, feeling his skin prick under his heavy gaze.

“Eager,” he whispered, releasing a breath of a laugh when Soap squirmed, mortified. “I’m around, Johnny.”

Soap watched him lift his marked hand to his face, pressing his lips to the back of his hand once, before pulling away.

“Suppose you just haven’t seen me yet.”

+

The following day, Soap lingered behind the toilet partition, not leaving until Ghost silently exited their cell.

Not hiding, he assured himself. *Just a tactical retreat.*

Following Officer Figs and Sagan was a miserable sort of drudgery, and he had the sinking sense that it was likely only going to make him more of a target in the end. The leering stares when he walked past Yorkshire told him as much,

When Ghost sucks up to them, he gets ridiculous benefits. He thought of his mask and shower time with a frown. *I just get stuck in a cell with a soulmate killer and told to deal with it.*

Trailing along a group of new prisoners and the two Officers, Soap didn’t expect to encounter any issues with his venomous peers. But some inmates were truly incorrigible, and the threat of punishment was dim when they were already thoroughly caged.

He’d read about it happening, but he didn’t think he’d witness it. Or experience it for himself.

The cup of cold, yellow piss sent in his direction luckily, or unluckily, caught more on Officer Figs than himself, but any amount of the disgusting spray sprinkled on his person was unacceptable. The guilty inmate immediately bolted, but Sahan and a patrolling guard tackled him down, roughly smashing his face against the concrete.

Bloody fuck, he cringed, holding his tarnished clothes away from himself. When the dust had settled, Sahan grunted at him to clean himself up, and Soap was eagerly on his way.

The showers were occupied as normal, inmates wandering in and out of the steaming room, and Soap marched in with determination.

He wasn't sure if being vulnerable in front of Ghost alone or the general rabble was safer for him at this point, but he wasn't going to wait for the man's idiotic sign to find out.

Sequestering himself in a curtained stall seemed a safer option than the open air ones, so he quickly stepped into the tiled cubby, hoping no one took particular note of his arrival. Chucking his soiled clothing in a plastic bag, he relished the near scorching torrent that poured over him, urgently working up a sudsy lather over his skin.

After several minutes, the tension he'd been holding in his shoulders had seeped slowly out of him, and he rubbed his sore nape with a shuddering breath. His skin felt overly sensitive, and his brain slow to form simple connections.

He looked at his wide open soul with a weary frown, the stall lit in a starlit, silvery haze. It would've been beautiful, if he didn't know just how vulnerable it was making him.

In a perfect world, it would've taken weeks for their souls to warm and open to each other, and when they were eventually ready to complete the bond, it would've opened. They should've immediately formed the bond after that - it was dangerous to have it open like this, and he knew he would deteriorate the longer his soul was left unanswered.

He hadn't even met Simon properly, but his mere proximity had cracked him wide open.

Soap suspected it was the years of unnatural suppression of his own instincts that had led to it happening this way, but he couldn't afford to delay a connection much longer. The low thrumming pain in his head, and the constant ache in his muscles told him as much.

He tied off his plastic bag and finished up quickly, pulling on his jogging bottoms with a sigh. When he grasped around for his spare sweatshirt, he blinked, realising he'd forgotten it in his cell.

Not putting on the piss shirt again, he thought with a grimace. Everyone's just gonna get a gun show, whether they want it or not.

He put his glove back on and draped his towel around his neck. When he twitched the curtain back and faltered.

Everyone was gone.

Suspicious, he crept tentatively out of the showers and staggered to a stop at the entrance.

The blasted 'Occupied' sign was up again, and everyone had seemed to have gotten the memo but Soap.

Turning to the hall, his stomach fluttered nervously at the sight of Ghost staring at him from where he leant against the wall. He had no towel or toiletries in sight, only armed with a weighty gaze.

What the fuck, Soap thought. *You're not even using the shower?*

It didn't take a genius to figure out that he'd cleared it out on purpose, but if he'd wanted to corner him alone, waiting outside in the hallway in open view of the guards seemed to defeat the purpose.

The man's eyes were shamelessly drifting over his naked chest, and his abdomen jumped under his scrutiny.

Ghost stepped away from the wall, crowding into Soap and forcing him to crane his neck up at him. His voice was a deep, throaty whisper, voice cracked from apparent disuse. "Didn't wait for the sign?"

Soap was so flabbergasted by the sound of him actually talking, he merely gawped at him stupidly, at a complete loss for words.

Ghost let out a weary sounding breath, before lifting up his hand. Soap's heart sped up slightly, but he didn't flinch even when the man hovered it near his head. He reached over him and plucked off the sign, the paper fluttering passed his ear as he pulled away.

Soap couldn't hear anything beyond the roaring in his ears, and stared after him in a daze when he turned and walked away.

+

Come tea time, Soap was sitting alone on the fringes of the mess hall, when he realised he'd forgotten to collect his breakfast for the following day. He scrambled back up to the queue, but the unimpressed prisoner manning the counter turned him away.

“I didn’t get my breakfast,” Soap explained in exasperation.

The man sniffed self-importantly. “Rules are rules, you get it with tea, or not at all. Prevents double-ups.” He gave a plastic smile.

It’s a prison kitchen, mate, he thought, defeated. You’ve just gone mad with power.

Frustrated, he wandered back to his table, and quickly realised his dinner had been upturned and smeared across the floor. The men at the adjacent tables smirked silently to each other.

A passing guard did a double take, and Soap was soon scrubbing on his hands and knees while the men left for free time, purposefully jostling him as they left.

He could feel a piercing stare on his nape as he cleaned, and shivered with a cold, uneasy fear.

Ghost.

+

When Soap woke up within the dream, he took note of his surroundings with a frown.

He’d been too dazed and caught up with Simon to look around properly last time, but standing there now, he knew immediately where he was.

Why here?

He was stood outside the 141’s Barracks, looking up at their quarters in wistful disbelief. *Didn’t think I’d see this place again.*

Simon was nowhere in sight, and he stepped into the building, looking around curiously. The space looked much the same, but any signage or papers blurred when he tried to read them, and the lack of people gave it an eerie, liminal feeling.

He ignored Price’s and Gaz’s doors, knowing they’d be empty and lacking detail anyway, and beelined for his old room instead. When he touched the doorknob, he felt an eager thrum in his mark.

In here, Johnny.

The room was not quite as he remembered it.

His standard issue bunk had been replaced with a significantly larger bed, the lighting softer than the old harsh fluorescents he recalled. The olive green walls and hardwood floors were familiar though, as was the small window to the side.

The beautiful man resting in his bed was definitely not something he remembered.

Simon was shirtless, one leg cocked at the knee, and his forearm resting over his eyes. Soap roamed his eyes over his firm and muscled body greedily, flushing at the smirk that flitted across his partially hidden face.

He lifted his arm from his face when Soap gingerly approached, eyes dark and eager. In a blur of motion, he curled an arm around Soap and pulled him heavily down on top of him.

“Aye, hello to you too,” Soap wheezed, dizzy from his open, fraying soul. He tried to rollover to the side, but Simon held fast, and he was too tired to do anything but collapse his full body weight on him.

Simon hummed, wrapping both arms around him and rubbing along his sore back soothingly. Sensing his pain, he massaged his aching nape and Soap groaned, pressing his face into his naked chest, exposing his vulnerable skin eagerly.

He should’ve been uncomfortable falling into bed with a stranger and letting him touch him so freely, but he felt so impossibly safe and relaxed.

“Not a stranger,” Simon mumbled into his temple. “Your soulmate.”

The joy that bubbled in Soap was quickly ruined by the cloying shame that overwhelmed it, and Simon paused his ministrations. He nuzzled into his head, and Soap turned his face away, swallowing heavily.

“Why do you feel like that, Johnny?” He asked curiously, resuming his gentle massage.

Soap closed his eyes, flexing his scarred mark nervously. He didn’t want to think about him, didn’t want to sully this place and moment with his destructive hatred that had seeped into every good thing Soap had ever gotten his fingers on -

But he was shaking with silent sobs now, embarrassed and thoroughly melancholic. Simon slowly rolled them until Soap was flat on his back

underneath him, his distraught face uncomfortably exposed to the man's wild scrutiny.

Not here, he begged and Simon's gaze softened, catching a leaking tear with warm fingers.

"You'll tell me one day," he said darkly, and there was no question in his voice. There was a subdued, volcanic rage lashing at him from Simon's end, the other man trying to curb himself for Soap's benefit.

Soap's quiet crying ceased abruptly when his stomach gave off a mortifying growl. Simon rested his face against his rumbling middle, and Soap startled at the touch.

"Are you hungry?" Simon muttered, eyes shuttered as he lifted his face towards him. "You didn't eat much."

Soap grimaced. "Saw that, did you?"

"Did you at least eat your breakfast after lockup?" Simon asked, nuzzling into his stomach absently. Soap gave into the temptation and ran his fingers through his locks, emboldened when the other man rumbled happily.

"No," he said absently. "Forgot to pick it up, and they wouldn't let me grab it afterwards."

Simon lifted his face from his stomach, frowning up at him. "I'll look after you, then," he said smugly, leaning up and pressing his lips to his sternum. Soap clutched his hair at the feeling. "Since you seem incapable of doing it yourself."

"Oi," Soap laughed, warmed at the sentiment despite himself. "I'm perfectly capable -"

His stomach growled even louder between them, and Simon's lips turned up.

A low, sluggish pain flipped through his body and he grimaced, as another fear lingered in his mind. "Shouldn't we," he trailed off, presenting his trembling marked hand to Simon, who took it eagerly, pressing it against his face. "It's dangerous, keeping it open like this."

Presumptuous, he thought to himself sullenly. *But it hurts* -

"Are you scared, love?" Simon murmured, sounding far too pleased by

the idea. Soap gaped at the easy endearment, and the other man spoke with dark assurance, "I won't let anyone interfere with your soul, Johnny."

Only I can.

How? His brain was fogging over, Simon's face blurring before him as his eyesight failed. *When you're never even here.*

There were lips on his cheeks, and then his low voice was crooning, "I told you, you just haven't seen me yet." Simon's breath was warm across his face when he leant back. "Come find me."

+

Soap woke up gradually in his cell, and he pressed his hands to his eyes, smiling widely with his mind still lingering on Simon's easy, relentless affection

He'd spent so long denying their connection, and after only a few dreams he was desperate to be close to him again.

I want this, he thought quietly into his mind, resting his marked hand against his chest with a shaky breath. *And no one can stop me this time.*

+

When Soap blinked, it was tea time again, and another day had passed.

The ringing alarm ripped Soap from his sluggish stupor, and he fluttered his eyes open. He was in the library again, an open book resting in his lap.

I don't remember what I did today. He wiped at his sweaty forehead, breath short and sharp. His mark was stinging, reminding him incessantly of his unprotected soul, demanding he find his soulmate and *complete the bond* -

I'm trying, he thought, whisper soft into his mind. He'd spent so long denying it that he had no idea how to find Simon anymore.

He joined the fray of people heading for the hall, hanging at the edges to avoid being surrounded. He spotted Ethan nearby, but the other man sank into the crowd when he noticed him, clearly no longer interested in conversation after his mark had exploded for all to see.

Too much of a target to be caught dead with, he thought blandly.

Entirely friendless and alone, he was so absorbed in figuring out a way to find Simon, he didn't notice the leg that had been kicked out in front of him until he was already falling.

He staggered and fell bodily into a tall, bulky frame. Warm arms steadied him, brushing his shoulder soothingly, but Soap was already spinning in a dizzying twirl with a snarl, pointing his shaking, marked hand at them.

"Better bolt, ya dafties, or I'll-" Soap stopped abruptly. The once snickering felons were already fearfully running away.

Am I that scary, he pondered doubtfully. The warm hand on his back felt achingly familiar, and he turned hopefully, wondering if he'd finally found Simon -

His eyes travelled up a black-clad, broad chest and tilted his gaze straight up to a sinister mask.

Holy mother of Christ, he wheezed.

It was Ghost, the Soulmate Killer, whose hands were rubbing absent circles into his shoulder blades.

"Hello?" Soap croaked weakly. He opened and closed his mouth, at a complete loss for words by the light touch on his shoulders.

Why are you doing that? He thought, strangled and on edge.

The other man blinked slowly at him, his shadowed eyes roaming silently over his face.

Itching under the weight of his stare, an insane idea formed, and he debated for only a tiny moment before speaking.

"Are you going to kill me?" Soap croaked, angry at how weak he sounded.

Because you are weak. He swayed dangerously on his feet, anchored by the arm around his back. Ghost huffed a breath at him, pressing harder into his aching muscles, and Soap's eyes drooped, docile and weightless in his would-be murderer's arms.

Ghost slowly dropped his arms away, and Soap shivered at the lingering brush of his gloved hand near his wrist. His vision was

unfocused, and when he looked into his mask, for a moment he thought he saw Simon's concerned eyes looking back at him.

Soap shook his head, silently pulling away and drifting towards the mess hall. He didn't notice the figure silently following close behind him, a protective and menacing shadow, staring down the unruly inmates who circled Soap's fragile and diminished form.

+

Soap had been sitting at his table for an astonishingly long time before he realised Ghost was sitting right by his side. He fluttered his eyes at him, too dazed to be truly afraid of him, watching his exposed, chewing mouth openly.

When did you get here?

He looked down at his own dinner tray, and bleakly noted his lack of breakfast again. *What a stupid system.* He knew he wouldn't get it if he asked again, and ate his food in mulish silence.

Ghost seemed to somehow have snagged two breakfasts, he noted sullenly. *Some bloody special privileges he has.*

"Oi is MacTavish sitting with *Ghost*?" Soap cringed as Yorkshire cried out across the way.

"Fattening him up for the slaughter?" Another one suggested, and Soap's lips turned downward, fearful awareness creeping up his spine.

What am I doing? He thought, food turning sour in his mouth. *Sitting with the known soulmate murderer, of all people.*

Ghost sighed low and long, and Soap blinked up at the sound. It was the most he'd ever heard him vocalise since he'd spoken at the showers, and he felt strangely eager for more. Ghost looked at him consideringly, and the surrounding mens jeers faded into the background.

After a moment, he *winked* at Soap, then went back to eating.

Soap jolted, mark warming oddly in his palm.

What, he thought haltingly. *What.*

When the bell signalling tea's end arrived, Soap faltered as he stood, realising Ghost's second breakfast had been nudged over by his empty

tray.

He picked it up and looked up at Ghost, who collected both of their trays without a second glance.

Soap curled his hands around the parcel as the other prisoners flowed around him, disturbed and oddly touched in equal measure.

+

Soap collapsed into the bottom bunk, not bothering to pull the blanket over his shivering, sweating body. He drifted in and out of awareness, confused by the warm leather that occasionally brushed his forehead. He felt his glove being slipped off his hand, and he mumbled a weak protest, the silvery light peaking through his closed eyelids.

"Simon," he whispered sleepily, grasping loosely at the hand on his face. The gloved hand curled around his naked one, and he sighed in deep satisfaction, calmed by the close proximity of their soul so close to his own.

There was a dip in the bed, a warm body curling around his own, before the blanket was pulled up and around them both. Only then did Soap finally fall into darkness, his soulmate's hand warm around his own.

+

Soap had hoped he'd see Simon again in his dreams, but instead he was visited by some of the many horrors of his past.

He was a child again, sitting at the dining room table, fat tears rolling down his cheeks.

"When the time comes, you will resist its pull," His father lectured calmly as he carved the skin from Soap's tiny marked palm with a sharp blade, scolding him when he sobbed. "It will lead you astray if you let it, but your soul must only be given to God, or you'll burn in hell, John."

Soap cried silently, shame and agony licking a painful fire through him. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I don't want to go to hell."

His father had only gripped harder onto his wrist, pinning him with impassioned, disappointed eyes. "My only son," he whispered, looking right through him. "An abomination."

His mum stood idly by in their sunny kitchen, ignoring them both while she peacefully sipped her tea.

Little Soap didn't notice the man outside the french windows, an obvious anachronism, his stormy gaze staring wildly as his chest heaved with poorly suppressed rage.

Blood seeped heavily down his palm, and the vision changed as a drop of blood fell to the floor.

Soap was standing in their garden, only months earlier, a camo green bag slung over his shoulders. He'd been on active duty for months, and he'd thought...

"Why are you here, eejit boy," His father had scoffed, waving him away. "Get out of my sight, I told you you weren't welcome here."

"But," Soap whispered, trembling as rain pelted down on him. He gulped and blinked cold rain from his eyes. "I stopped following the mark, I haven't been looking for him."

'I thought he was with the 141,' he thought wearily. 'I was wrong.'

Soap froze when he registered his own words, but the mistake had already been made.

His father narrowed his eyes, pulling his dressing gown around him with a raised brow. "Him?" He said dangerously, "So it's not enough to have that thing on your hand, but you're disordered now as well - have you been lying with men, John? When you told me black and blue that you weren't?"

Soap blinked furiously, shivering as the wind shook his bones. He had, many times over, and he'd liked it, even if it wasn't quite right and he felt hollow deep in his core after.

He couldn't do anything right.

"I stopped following it for you," he insisted still, crying quietly in earnest now. "Even though it hurts, you told me I had to, and I listened."

If he allowed his mark to seep into his thoughts, it screamed so, so much.

His neglected soul howled at the fringes of his mind, and if he slipped up and let it seep into his brain, it overtook everything.

He needs you, find him, find him, find him -

His father rolled his eyes at him, the dismissal clear in his gesture.

Soap shook the rain from his eyes, wondering why he'd bothered to come back at all.

The choice quietly materialised in his mind, to take a chance on his soulmate again, or keep choosing his family, who never seemed to have chosen him back.

But he would, wouldn't he?

Something shuddered and splintered in Soap's mind.

"Have you let it in, John?" His father yelled over the deluge. "I know you have-"

Soap watched his mouth move in slow motion, but he was just so tired of listening to it.

Soap had been dying a slow, insidious death by a thousand cuts, his father's words sharp as the blades he used to flay him with.

Trying to destroy his soul, he knew deep down. He wasn't interested in saving him, only breaking him apart.

Destroy him, his cloying, poisonous soul crooned at him. He'll lead you right to him, it's not too late.

He could visualise all of the years of his life he'd wasted, suppressing his nature, throwing himself into his training to dull the blistering agony that cut into his brain if he wasn't strong enough to ignore it. The endless years trapped by nightmares, inflicted by this very man, who academically he knew was supposed to love him, but never once had.

His soulmate might not forgive him for neglecting him, but they were his, and he owed him better than this.

His mark sparked encouragingly, sensing the tide turning fully in its favour.

Soap finally allowed himself to feel the full force of his shrieking soulmark, a festering, murky purpose slowing his heart and leaching the blue from his eyes. His father stopped mid-sentence, something in Soap's countenance giving him pause.

He'd never seen fear in his father's eyes before, but he liked it.

Quite a lot.

He took a halting step back, hand curling around the front door. Soap let his bag drop from his shoulder with a thud.

Run, his mark hissed - only, the voice of his mark was not some disembodied, magical force, but his own, finally ringing clear with his own vile desires.

When his father spun, fearfully sprinting back into their family home -

There was a bitter, chilling silence in his mind, a roaring howl of wind, and then.

Soap gave chase.

When he caught up to him in the dining room, he didn't prolong his suffering - a small mercy that he didn't deserve, when Soap had suffered so much at that very table. But he didn't want to hear or see his bleating face alive in motion any longer than necessary.

He unceremoniously snapped his neck, and then the figure of his nightmares was simply dead, falling heavily onto the mahogany table.

Shivering, he allowed his foul instincts to guide him, rummaging in the kitchen for the most appropriate blade, staring blankly at its glinting edge for a moment before bringing it to the body.

By the time Soap was done, he'd split his father's rib cage apart, tearing through his organs until he'd found what he was looking for.

When it was finally torn from his chest, Soap stared at the evidence of his once beating heart in vacant disbelief, the organ warm and heavy in his bare hands. He gazed at it sightlessly for a time, and the destructive, devastating inkiness faded slowly from his mind.

'Just wanted to see it for myself,' he thought dully, before his numb fingers slackened. The heart fell to the floor, and Soap slowly looked at his father's still face, frozen forever in terror.

It wasn't long before Soap's own face crumpled, and he was weeping powerfully but silently over the cooling body, unable to vocalise his cries even then.

A warm hand curled around his nape, and he jerked his head up, swivelling to find Simon by his side.

A dreaming memory, and his soulmate had stumbled right into the carnage of it.

‘No,’ Soap thought, trying and failing to pull away. ‘Can’t see, can’t see what I’ve done.’

The nightmare tore apart at the seams, Soap desperate to run, but Simon held fast. They reappeared in the 141 Barracks, tumbling into bed again.

Soap swallowed, realising his bloodied clothing and skin were clean once more. He tried to roll out of bed, but Simon pounced on him, pressing his body down until he was hopelessly trapped on his back beneath him.

He was panicking, breath coming out too fast, fearing Simon’s judgement and disgust-

But he could only sense Simon’s silent understanding, the total absence of fear or rejection stark in his heart. Soap finally met his eyes, floored at the calm assurance he found in them.

Simon didn’t seem bothered by his mindless and savage destruction at all.

“He hurt you,” Simon said simply, as if that was the end of it. A possessive, dark thought swirled intently, ‘And he kept you from me.’

“Doesn’t mean he had to die - not up to me,” Soap trailed off wearily. He’d killed plenty of people, but it had never been personal like that - a pure, cathartic expression of rage, a release after years of fear.

‘If you hadn’t,’ Simon thought, eyes black and adoring in the soft light. ‘I never would’ve found you.’

Soap didn’t realise Simon had a grip of his hand until fingers pressed into his palm.

“Thought you’d done this to yourself,” Simon admitted quietly, trailing the jagged scar tissue of his soulmark. The thought went unsaid, “That you didn’t want it.”

“No!” Soap hissed, then faltered at his intensity. “I always wanted it. Too much.”

Soap thought of his soul opening within days of arriving in prison, his

pathetic, eager heart bursting wide open, desperate despite knowing nothing of his other half.

Simon smiled deeply. "What's wrong with that?" he murmured, stroking his skin. Soap could feel the echoes of Simon's own desperation, his many years of rejection curdling and spoiling his heart, and the pure relief at how easy and natural it had been once Soap had arrived.

There was a lurking, fragile instability in Simon's soul from the years of neglect, and Soap's own yearning had been a surprising, soothing balm.

Simon pressed his weight down into him, and Soap hummed when he trailed kisses up his jaw, gentle at first, then increasing in intensity as he moved downward. Soap wriggled his arms out and enveloped his back, gripping his hair with a surprised breath when he sucked hard on his neck.

Soap felt Simon's already hardening cock through his jeans, and startled at the weight of it. Groaning, Simon pressed their hips together, eyes wild as he pulled back to watch Soap's face.

There was a stray thought in his mind, hazy with want as Simon slid their clothed lengths against each other. *Would fuck you into this mattress, if i knew what I was doing.*

Soap moaned, and Simon's mouth parted at the noise.

Want to be good for you, Johnny. Simon pressed his face quickly into his neck.

Soap pawed at his chest, as eager lips trailed relentlessly down his throat. "Wait," he breathed, dismayed. "Have you never?"

Had anyone? The question lingered quietly in his mind.

Simon pulled away, expression inscrutable, save for the pink blooming across his cheekbones. "Why would I have?" He grumbled, rocking his hips against Soap's deliberately. "When I had someone made for me out there."

Didn't want anyone else, he added quietly.

Soap spluttered in deep disbelief for a moment, before he grinned widely at him, curling a leg behind his arse and pulling him closer. He

reached his hands up to cradle Simon's flushing face.

"Waiting for your soulmate?" *Only read about people doing that in those sappy romance novels.* He gave a pleased laugh, crooning huskily at him, "Are you a *romantic* , Simon?"

The idea gave him a possessive little thrill. *Do I get to corrupt you all for myself?*

The man blinked owlishly, pressing into Soap's touch, eyes lidded as though hypnotised.

Flattered and slightly bashful, Soap smiled up at him, thumbing his cheekbone. "I didn't wait," he admitted simply. *One of us should know what they're doing here,* he reminded cheekily.

Simon merely rolled his eyes, grumbling, "Just don't think about them at me."

Soap giggled madly. "That's the worst way to get someone to not think about-

Lips pressed heavily against his, clumsy at first, but Soap eagerly guided him close, groaning when he slipped his tongue inside. *Perfect, perfect,* his brain swirled. He wrapped his legs around Simon and tugged him close, moaning happily into his mouth.

Simon settled into the cradle of his hips, grinding his cock into Soap's and kissing him deeply as he set a slow, steady pace. Soap moaned eagerly and wantonly despite the barriers between them.

Only think about me, a possessive plea tugged at his mind. *I'll make you forget them all.*

"Yer a weapon," Soap huffed fondly, gently pulling away, lips hovering near Simon's. "Bit mad, aren't you?"

He was not disturbed at all by that discovery."

"For you," Simon muttered, unashamed. "Waited a long time for you, love."

The endearment, and a particularly clever thrust stole the breath from him, and Simon's lips curved up.

Soap's voice turned sly. "Was that your first kiss, too?" He felt the immediate affirmation in Simon's blood.

“Will have to kiss you properly when we’re awake, make it special,” Soap sighed, relishing Simon’s flustered pleasure, and murmuring sweet promises up at him. “Have to figure out what you like, do you want me to take you first, or do you want to try fucking me-”

Simon licked into his mouth with a desperate breath, grinding their hips together with smooth, lengthened strokes. *Want to fuck you first*, he begged inwardly. *You can fuck me, too, if you want, I’ll take whatever you give me, Johnny.*

“You will, will you?” Soap gasped roughly, their mouths parting wetly. Simon smirked at his dazed face, unrelenting in the rocking of his hips.

He could feel his release approaching, and Simon’s eyes widened, sensing it for himself.

Shuddering, Soap groaned, “Where are you?” He writhed under Simon’s heavy, clothed cock, the imperfect friction coiling deep in his spine. “I want to close it.”

There was a hand on his cheek, and another pressing under his back, tilting his hips up into Simon’s. “What’s that, Johnny?” he panted wildly. “What do you want from me?”

He knew he was going to come, trapped under the perfect weight of him, his reverent eyes eagerly watching his collapse.

Soap snatched at Simon’s silvery palm, grip possessive and covetous, his eyes turning black as his soul swirled into his irises. Simon watched the change with wide, captivated eyes.

“Give yourself to me,” Soap hissed, licking a hot stripe up his wrist and swirling his tongue over his mark, and Simon cried his name, eyes dazed in wonder. Soap’s climax crept higher at the sight.

A confusing vision entered Soap’s mind, one of himself moaning sweetly under the hot spray of the shower, head thrown back, skin wet and flushed hotly. The movement of Soap’s arm and body was obvious, and the lewd, slick sounds of his fist stroking his cock was loud and heady in the empty shower room. When he came, he slapped a hand over his mouth, crying out wantonly, oblivious to Simon’s craven, hungry stare mere metres away.

Here and now wouldn’t be the first time Simon had watched Soap come, but it’d be the first time he’d been directly responsible for it.

Soap thighs clenched, and he held Simon tighter, even as his brain buckled with realisation, his orgasm pooling hotter and slicker from the devastating knowledge pouring into his mind.

“Simon,” he questioned, voice breathy and high with uncertainty. Simon watched him back with a slight smile, eyes dark and amused, cradling his head warmly and thrusting harder.

He laughed breathlessly when Soap moaned, eyes fluttering in confusion. “Do you see me now, love?”

Soap’s breaths shortened, staring widely into his crinkling eyes, sensing Simon’s sick satisfaction merge with his own mortified desire.

“You were so scared of me,” Simon cooed softly, laughing when his eyes rolled back. “Think you’ve always known it was me deep down, just look at you.”

His desperate, wide open soul, greedy for him the moment he’d set eyes on him.

Soap wasn’t scared of him now, he only felt safe and wanted, craved him deep in his marrow. Simon’s eyes softened, and he crushed Soap against his chest, enveloping him in a warm embrace.

“Of course I wouldn’t hurt you, sweet thing,” he said, voice shaking as his fracturing soul leaked through. “Just wanted to be close to you, that’s all I’ve ever wanted.”

“Ghost,” he cried out desperately, and Simon groaned, “Yes,” rolling his hips into a smooth circle, relentlessly pushing him higher and higher until he finally fell inexorably over the edge.

Soap tightened his legs and arms around him and arched his back, light spotting his vision, the cloying mix of Simon’s danger and love unspooling his orgasm heavily down his spine. When he came hot and slick into his own clothes, Simon’s lidded, victorious eyes watched him warmly, relishing the sight of him falling apart in his arms.

Ghost, he thought dazedly, shaking as the waves crashed over him. *It’s you.*

Soap gasped and shivered as Ghost rocked him through the aftershocks, pressing soft, lingering kisses to his cheeks, murmuring nonsense praise into his skin.

Soap blinked up at him in a daze, eyeing his neglected, straining cock sympathetically, when the dream suddenly began to fade around them.

What? He thought, *Why now?*

“It’s not the end,” Ghost needled gently, and Soap shuddered when his possessive mind wrapped tightly around his own. “I told you I wasn’t far.”

Soap weakly chased after his lips, sighing when their mouths joined lazily, the dream melting away as Ghost’s thoughts swept into his mind.

And I’ll never let you go.

+

Soap woke up slowly, confused by the warmth in the empty space in his bunk, and an unfamiliar scent in his nose.

Simon, he thought, mind fogged once more now that he was awake.
Ghost.

The Soulmate Killer.

He felt no fear, he could barely muster the strength to even think with his soul groaning sluggishly but incessantly at him.

Find him, find him, find him.

Blinking his bleary eyes awake, he slowly unfurled the sheets from his sweating body, holding the bars on the bed to pull his weak body upright. He noted the unlocked cell with a frown, wondering what time it was, and why no one seemed to care that he was still sleeping.

He realised there was another one of Ghost’s little signs stuck to the phone on the wall. “Stay here.” Was all it read, and Soap bristled.

I’m a prisoner, he thought slowly. *I can’t do whatever I want like you seem to.*

Another, smaller part of him was hurt that Ghost had left him alone, after what they’d shared, and knowing how weak and eager he was to close the mark. He thought he’d wake up and they’d finally be together, become one after all the time wasted apart.

Does he not want it? He stared at his twinkling hand in growing agony, arm trembling nervously.

What if this is revenge? His mind was spiralling, his exposed soul an open wound he couldn't close, not without him - and the fear and haze was clouding everything in his absence. *Because I took so long?*

His mark would stay open and ready for him forever, and if he didn't take it, someone else would destroy it eventually.

Soap wondered if that was his plan all along, to tear his soul open and let the vicious sharks around him break it apart, reaping destruction on the part of himself he'd denied for most of his life.

He'd killed his father for the damage he'd done to his soul, but Soap knew he'd let Simon do whatever he wanted with it.

But his is open too, a small, hopeful voice reminded him. Soap remembered the unsteady, shuddering edges of Simon's soul, and recalled his words. He'd grown used to having his soul neglected, unlike Soap.

It wouldn't make a difference to him, he decided, breath coming out too fast. *He could live with his soul wide open and it wouldn't matter.*

Soulmate Killer, his brain shuddered, a devastating idea taking shape. *He must hate marked people, after what I did to him.*

Even as all of the sickening conclusions overwhelmed his collapsing mind, his soul still screamed its demands at him.

Find him, find him, find him.

A memory of Simon in his dream drifted in his fraying brain.

There were lips on his cheeks, and then his low voice was crooning, "I told you, you just haven't seen me yet." Simon's breath was warm across his face when he leant back. "Come find me."

Soap staggered forward, purposeful and terrified, clutching his exposed, silvery hand to his abdomen as he stepped out of his cell.

I'll find you, he promised weakly, his soul sparking dangerously as he wobbled forward. *And if you don't want it, I'll just let them all break it.*

Ghost strode out of the prison commissary, his bag of supplies tied around his wrist.

He hadn't wanted to leave Johnny alone, even for the few minutes he'd been gone, but he knew he needed to go now if he wanted their bonding to go well.

Not that sex was a necessary part of it, but he would prefer to be over prepared than regret it later.

Johnny's sweet grumblings when he'd disentangled his limbs from his person had been charming to behold, but his glassy, confused stare, not so much. He'd deteriorated alarmingly over the short time his soul had been opened, and it needed to be dealt with as soon as possible.

Johnny had been dead on his feet the day prior, the inmates eying him menacingly, and the guards turning a blind eye, unwilling and unable to fix the issue anyway. No one could, except Ghost.

He was more himself when Ghost was near, especially in their shared dream space, where their souls were closest even without the bond completed.

Ghost's own soul had long since cracked and buckled over the years without Johnny, but it had been a gradual thing for him to contend with, and the opening of his own mark had oddly been more a relief than debilitating.

He'd had wanted Johnny to come to the realisation about his identity himself, but he was deteriorating fast with his soul split wide open like it was. It was dangerous, and Ghost hated letting it go on as long as it had, but he'd feared that he'd have been rejected immediately had he revealed himself sooner.

He risked losing him in more ways than one, if he'd moved too fast or slow. But he was buoyed by their dream, warmed to know that Johnny wasn't afraid, and that he wanted him just as much, even knowing who he was.

I'll tell you everything, he'd promised his sleeping face. *When you're whole again.*

Walking into their cell, he stopped dead in his tracks. Johnny was not tucked into his bed as he'd left him, and his shoes were nowhere in sight.

I was only gone ten minutes, Ghost thought, dread rising as he threw his purchases onto the bunk and turned on his heel. *Where could you have gone?*

+

Soap had been wandering aimlessly without truly looking at where he was going, frowning at his marked hand fiercely, trying to will a link to Simon to form in his own brain.

I used to be able to feel you, years ago, he thought, desperate and guilty. *Before I cut you off.*

He journeyed down to the lower levels, wondering if Simon was hiding from him, or merely working as most prisoners were supposed to be.

Is it even work time? He had no watch to speak of, and his general sense of reality was slipping through his fingers.

Much like his second day at prison, it wasn't until he found himself in that familiar empty, white corridor, that Soap realised he was being followed.

The Graveyard, he thought woozily.

He had no time to react before he was quickly grabbed by the arms and slammed to the wall, ears ringing from the destabilising movement.

His stomach churned ominously. *Gonnae make me boke.*

Soap grimaced up at Yorkshire's sneering face, the blurry figures of the two Puddings dancing in his periphery.

Not ideal, he noted weakly, *It's three versus one, and my soul's in a fankle.*

"What's wrong with 'im?" One of the Puddings asked, and Yorkshire shook him, making him groan weakly.

A meaty hand grasped his left arm and slapped it against the wall. "Must be this," Yorkshire declared, and Soap realised they were looking at his bright, silvery soul, cheerfully spilling light onto their bemused faces.

"Where's your soulmate, then?" Yorkshire asked loudly, "Didn't want

to deal with you mithering them?"

Yorkshire's face wavered, and then it was his father staring him down, hissing about his terrible, disgusting soul.

I know, he agreed weakly, shaking as grief tore his mind apart. *I know, you didn't want it either. No one does.*

Soap hadn't been able to find Simon - after all those years ignoring his soulmate, he'd ruined his own natural instincts, and had likely led himself to his own doom.

"Was just gonna bray ya a bit." Yorkshire looked between him and his mark speculatively. "But I heard it hurts, if someone else touches that thing."

Yorkshire's face twisted between his and his father's face, and Soap looked away, sickened by the unsettling transformation. The Puddings mumbled nervously behind him, eyeing his exposed soul with wary awe.

"Thought we were just gonna rough him up a bit, boss," one of them said, staring at Yorkshire's hand, so close to Soap's soul. "Not get involved in all that."

"Desecrating my soul," Soap slurred mindlessly, head drooping on his chest, too weak to keep it upright. He flopped his head up at them. "No soulmate after that."

He could see the intrigued gleam in Yorkshire's eye at the idea, the power to destroy him at a fundamental, cellular level so easily within his grasp. The man's eyes glinted from the light of his soul as he stared at it, weighing the decision as the others shifted nervously behind.

"Lighten up, Kev," Yorkshire said slowly, distracted by the shine of his mark. "Old mate clearly didn't want him, if he let him roam around like this."

Soap flinched as the truth of his words sank into him.

"If I don't do it, someone else will anyway." Yorkshire shrugged, and then the grip on his forearm slid upward, his decision clearly made.

He'd tried to remain unaffected by Ghost's disinterest, and the situation he was in, but with someone else's hand creeping closer to his soul, he couldn't help the stinging tears welling in his eyes.

Simon, he begged hopelessly into his mind. *I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I didn't want anyone else but you to have it, I'm sorry.*

All of his life, he'd been met with pain if he made a sound when he cried, and he'd been incapable of anything but silent tears for years now.

But it was like a flip had switched in his brain, and suddenly he was weeping loudly, body wracked with shuddering sobs as fear gripped his heart. There was a strange shiver in his hand, and an odd weightlessness in his mind at the change.

"Quit yer ruering," Yorkshire grunted as the Puddings backed away down the hall, discomfited by his heavy distress. "Doing you a favour here."

A strange clarity swept over his mind, and a feeling he hadn't sensed for years rushed into his mind.

Simon.

His panic and distress, ringing like a bell in his mind. Worried about something.

Worried about me, he realised, staggered by the idea.

The dizziness and disorientation from his open soul was lessening, the fog clearing somewhat as the blocks in his mind allowed his soulmate in again.

It's not yours, Soap thought slowly, breath seizing in his throat as his disgusting fingers crept closer. *Not yours, not yours.*

Yorkshire's face warped into his father's once more, and Soap's ragged, terrified breathing turned apoplectic. The man had only a split second to take note of the change in Soap, before he was ripping his arms from his grasp.

Soap snarled and tackled his gut just as he hooked his leg behind his knee, sending the towering man crashing to his back. Yorkshire's startled, enraged breath whooshed out of him as he made to launch himself up, but Soap was on him, grabbing his skull and smashing it against the floor. He pulled his head back and did it again, and again.

The man groaned, dazed, and Soap knew if he didn't stop soon, he'd kill him.

And? The darkness hissed in his mind. *He would've ruined everything.*

Soap hesitated for a moment, before he bared his teeth, decision made as he made to twist his neck around-

Sweet, warm arms floated around him like water, and he was ripped from the other man, pulled to his feet and held against a warm, solid chest.

Simon.

"Can't do too much permanent damage, love," he crooned, rubbing a gentle hand against his torso. "Remember where you are."

For a moment, he struggled in Ghost's arms, his back pressed tight to him, wanting nothing more than to destroy the cowering man on the floor. But Ghost's encouraging whispers eventually registered through his destructive haze.

Prison, Soap thought distantly. *No point extending my sentence further.*

Soap eventually relaxed in his arms, and Ghost hummed, his delight singing in Soap's veins.

Although he'd been improved by his renewed connection to Ghost, Soap felt the weariness of his exposed heart seep back into his body as the adrenaline wore off, his knees buckling dangerously. Ghost guided him, pressing him gently against the wall and allowing him to slide down to the floor.

"Told you to stay," he murmured as he knelt before him, stroking Soap's cheek.

Shaking his head, Soap said, "Told me to find you."

Ghost let out a long, exasperated sigh, gazing at him fondly. "Are you tired, Johnny? Rest for a bit, lazy thing."

Soap wanted to grumble in outrage, but he really *was* that exhausted, if he was being honest. *Just resting my eyes for a second*, he assured himself, as he slipped his eyes closed. He heard Ghost huff a small laugh, fingers lingering on his jaw, and a whisper of air as the other man stood.

Soap dozed in the Graveyard, blissfully drifting as panicked, shrieking cries echoed throughout the hall, the sounds of numerous bones being

systematically snapped and broken making for a grim soundtrack to his gentle rest.

He sensed Simon's absence for a few minutes as his steps echoed away, and he almost roused himself in alarm, before he felt his return once more.

There were additional footsteps, and the Pudding's voices cried out in shock.

Simon's voice curled in the air, sleek and dark "Take him to medical," he ordered shortly, and there was a wail of agony as someone was hefted up. "If you say a word..." He didn't finish the sentence, before the weeping man and the terrified Puddings vacated the hall.

When it was silent once more, there were arms curling around him, gently rousing him from his stupor.

"Where'd Yorksh'r go?" Soap slurred, frowning at the dark patch where the man once was as he was slowly brought to his feet. "Did I hear the Puddings, too?"

There was a heavy, baffled silence from Ghost for a moment, before he rested his masked head on Soap's shoulder, laughing lightly. "Did you not bother to learn their names, love?"

"When would that've come up," Soap grumbled, sinking happily into his embrace. "Big talk from the man who didn't speak for days."

"Why bother," Ghost snickered. "You do more than enough talking for the both of us."

Too tired to defend his honour, Soap closed his eyes into the other man's shoulders, swaying as he drifted dreamily away. The arms around him, and the slow, steady heartbeat vibrating in Ghost's chest lulled him quickly into a doze, and it wasn't long before he was resting fully into him.

The shoulders beneath him started shaking with silent laughter, and Soap groaned in irritation. "Did you fall asleep on me, Johnny?" He swept his arm up his back and leaned away, eyes glinting at him through the sockets of his mask.

The denial was immediate on his tongue. "No," Soap lied, blinking the exhaustion from his eyes.

A shrill klaxon blared, and he looked at Ghost with alarm. *That's not the lunch bell.*

The lilt of Ghost's voice was decidedly smug. "Lockdown," he murmured. "Have to go back to our cell."

Oh, Soap thought, and then another realisation hit. *Oh, you sneaky bastard.*

"No interruptions for a few hours," Ghost murmured suggestively, and Soap couldn't help the weak giggle he emitted.

He was led gently away from the empty corridor, the hand on his shoulder warm and steadying as they climbed back up to their wing.

"Have you seen the state of me? My heid's mince," Soap said around a yawn. "I don't think I'm up for anything you're thinking, Simon."

Ghost merely hummed, a cloying smugness peaking through their connection. "You'll feel better soon, Johnny."

+

Once they hit the main atrium, Ghost dropped his arms away, laughing at Soap's immediate pout.

Soap did his best to walk without falling over, and with Ghost steadying him quickly when he wobbled, they quickly made their way back to their cell. The doors to the entire wing were soon locked, the lights shut off, with only the flickering light outside their cell and the cold overcast outdoors lighting the space.

"Is that really necessary?" Soap muttered, jolting when Ghost pressed himself against his back, tucking his face against his neck.

His face, he realised, reaching a hand up behind him to touch blindly at his face, curling his fingers into his hair. Insistent kisses were being pressed against his jaw, and he turned in his arms, blinking when dizziness swarmed his brain.

"Don't think I can," he mumbled apologetically, and Simon's eyes softened, before he pressed a kiss to his forehead.

"Don't have to," Simon said, pushing him gently down onto his bunk.

Soap bounced slightly on the fraying, thin mattress, looking at him with a raised brow. "Giving me the wrong idea here then."

His words dissolved in his mouth when Simon knelt at his feet, a gentle question in his eyes.

“Gonna propose to me there, Simon?” Soap whispered stupidly, eyes wide in the flickering gloom.

Simon’s lips turned up, and Soap watched the eager little gleam light up his eyes with a tiny ache. He had a sense that this mischievousness was not a typical sight in the other man’s face.

Suits you, he thought quietly.

Soap realised Simon’s hands were behind his back, and he smirked deeply at Soap’s alarmed face. “I was joking,” he blurted quickly.

“Johnny,” Simon said, a laugh quivering his voice. “Would you do me the honour-”

“Simon,” Soap groused, blinking hard. His mouth was open and ready to grumble, when Simon presented his closed right hand to him, stealing the breath from his lungs. There was a silvery glow peaking through the lines of his closed fingers, appearing as though he was holding a light in his palm.

“Johnny,” he said, hushed this time, eyes serious and warm. There was a question in them, and a fragile fear drumming in the fringes of their tentative connection. “I know it’s soon, but you-” He cut himself off, eyes shuttering as he struggled to articulate himself.

Saving him the trouble, Soap eagerly proffered up his opposing left hand, unceremoniously uncurling his fingers and allowing the shimmering silver light to illuminate their muted cell. Simon’s wide, covetous eyes latched onto his mark, physically shuddering at the sight of it, leaning instinctively towards it.

He swallowed, looking up at Soap with pained, hopeful eyes.

“Johnny,” he said roughly. “Can I?” he trailed off, before he revealed his own identical chasm of silver, adding to the overwhelming light in the space.

Shivering, Soap didn’t realise he was leaning towards it until he fell off the bed, straight into Simon’s laughing embrace. He pressed his face into Simon’s neck, sliding his arms around him and smiling widely.

He was half sitting on some dank prison floor in the middle of

Manchester, serving out a long sentence for patricide, but he'd never felt more at peace in his entire life. He rubbed his face into Simon's warmth, breathing deeply and evenly in his shoulder as his nape was stroked.

Lips touched his ear, and Soap's eyes fluttered open.

"Sleeping again, love?" Simon snickered and curled his arms around him, one under his knees and under his back, and Soap wheezed at the shift in equilibrium as he was lifted easily into his arms.

He stared up at him hugely, Simon seemingly content to stand with him lying heavy along his arms. "Hard to believe you were part of the 141 - enemy could have read you a bedtime story and had you down for the count," Simon snickered, smirking widely.

Soap gaped at him, ready to defend himself, when the words registered fully.

"How did you know I was part of the 141?" He whispered tightly.

Simon nosed at his temple with a huff, murmuring, "The dreams in the Barracks was a small clue."

"You recognised my room, though?" Soap frowned at him, even as a conclusion formed slowly in his mind.

Lips pressed against his cheek, before Soap was slowly being lowered to his bunk, groaning at the slight dizziness that lingered in his head. Simon crawled over his body eagerly, caging him beneath him with his knees flanking his hips. "It was my room first, love."

Soap swallowed, silent tears welling in his eyes again. He went to cover his face, but Simon held his arms down, smiling down at his miserable face.

"I thought you'd never tried finding me, Johnny," he admitted quietly, cradling his face in both hands. "But it looks like you've been chasing me for a long time."

Soap squeezed his eyes shut, shuddering. He'd thought he'd been running from the mark when he'd thrown himself into his training, but he'd subconsciously been working his way to Simon the entire time.

"Price told me I was supposed to have a Lieutenant I'd be working

with,” Soap uttered, watching Simon’s eyes shutter at the mention of their former Captain. “But when I showed up, they weren’t there anymore.”

Chewing his cheek, Simon reluctantly murmured, “Was on leave, and it must’ve been when you left the UK, but,” he groaned and sat back on his knees between Soap’s spread thighs, pulling his hands away from his face as he moved. “I was used to being cut off from you, Johnny, but it was worse that time. Don’t know why.”

Wiggling himself up to a sitting position, Soap held his unmarked hand, listening quietly. “Was desperate, I saw soulmate specialists, and they all told me the same thing, that it’d be up to you to find me, if you ever wanted to.” He stared solemnly at Soap, gripping his hand tight. “Laswell had some intel about some human traffickers, linked to some important target of ours, something we were gonna be working on when I was back.”

He stroked the soft skin of Soap’s wrist, and continued, “They were a couple knee deep in human trafficking scandals, but I didn’t really care about that - it was the fact that they were happily marked together that really put me over the edge,” he said blandly, eyes inscrutable at the admission. “They were scum on paper, and I wouldn’t have thought twice about them during a mission, but I didn’t want to wait for that.”

Soap blinked gently.

“He turned himself in...” Ethan’s voice echoed in his mind.

“You got arrested on purpose?” Soap said slowly, and Simon gave an indulgent smile.

“It was a last resort,” he admitted easily. “The danger of the military almost got you, but you still missed me by weeks.” He stroked a free hand over his clothed hip. “But I’d heard that something about being imprisoned drives us a bit mad to save each other.”

He kissed Soap’s limp, slackened hand with a deeply satisfied smile. “And here you are,” he whispered. “Delivered yourself right to me, love.”

Soap couldn’t exactly blame him for making him kill his own father, he’d wanted to do that all by himself, in truth. But if he hadn’t done it, if Soap hadn’t allowed his mark to guide him there...

“What would you have done,” Soap asked in a tight strain. “If I didn’t come?”

He blinked at him serenely. “Nothing.”

“*Nothing* ?” Soap stressed, heart picking up speed, “You would’ve wasted away here, on the off chance that I got myself arrested?”

A vision of the Simon he’d met on his first night flitted across his mind, the silent and sombre figure in his mask, a sad spectre drifting quietly around the prison - waiting for Soap until he was either released early, or died alone in his cell, whichever came first.

He didn’t realise he was hyperventilating until Simon’s worried eyes caught his own, hands gently cradling his face. “Why,” his voice quavered, salt brimming in his eyelids. He’d wanted to say more, but he was too distraught by the idea of Simon executing such a ridiculous, hare-brained, idea, straight from the pages of some sordid romance novel -

“Hare-brained,” Simon laughed wetly, tears streaking down his own face. “Is it hare-brained if it worked?”

“Don’t laugh at me,” Soap threatened, blinking the spots from his eyes. He let out a strangled noise when Simon abruptly pulled him bodily into his arms. He looked down at him, gaze lidded and adoring as he whispered darkness to him.

“Would you have preferred it if I told you I would’ve gotten out,” he murmured, pressing his lips to his nose and trailing down to his eye sockets. “That I would’ve broken through your little block and found you?” He pushed Soap down onto his back, and he shuddered, parting his legs so Simon could fill the space between them. “Taken your soul whether you wanted me to or not?”

Oh Christ, Soap thought, moaning quietly and immediately covering it with his hand. He could feel himself thickening already, and keened when Simon boldly trailed his hand over the growing bulge in his sweats.

Not some blushing virgin, he thought wildly. *But an insatiable menace.*

“Could you have?” Soap whispered, voice small in the quiet cell, and Simon laughed, nuzzling into his cheek.

“We’ll never know now, will we?” He sighed, a curl of smug

satisfaction lancing through Soap. “You brought yourself to me anyway.”

There was a sudden blackness suffusing his vision, and he blinked in a quiet panic for a moment, before Simon’s confused face swam back into view. His mark throbbed oddly, and Soap whimpered.

It had been fine for a time, but his mark was relentless in its purpose. “Simon,” he whispered, raising himself up so he could grasp his marked arm, trailing his scarred flesh up and down his forearm, relishing Simon’s gentle shivers. “Never kissed you properly, did I?”

Simon leaned eagerly in, but Soap curled his other hand around his neck and moved his face, pressing delicate kisses first over his brow and his cheeks, humming when Simon laughed quietly, before trailing up and down both sides of his jaw.

He hesitated above his lips for a breath, looking at Simon’s relaxed face, before he pressed them softly together. Simon groaned, sliding his free hand around Soap’s back and licking impatiently at his mouth, nibbling hungrily at his lips.

When Soap allowed him entrance, he trailed his marked hand up Simon’s arm, not stopping until he found his hand and pressed their silvery palms together. Simon jolted, a disbelieving gasp breathed into his mouth.

There was a single heartbeat, a breath of pure silence, and then his arm warmed. He pulled Simon closer, shuddering into his mouth as tears dripped from his closed eyes. He could feel the chasms in their palms mingling, a shining light beaming bright behind his lids as their souls became hopelessly tangled.

Soap could sense the frayed, roughened edges of Simon’s soul - all of its gentle beauty and horrifying darkness, his desires and fears bleeding together into Soap’s heart, and he welcomed it all greedily, giving everything he had in turn.

Johnny, Simon’s voice whispered reverently in his mind, wondering at the shape of Soap’s soul. *You’re so beautiful.*

His disbelieving relief resounded strongly through Soap, and he sighed at the unfamiliar emotions rocking his body. He parted from him reluctantly, swallowing hard at the onslaught.

Gonna take a while to get used to that, Soap thought wryly. He blinked

slightly, feeling his strength fully return, as the fog lifted entirely from his mind.

Simon's manic, overjoyed grin filled his vision. "Will it?" he laughed, pressing happy kisses to his cheeks. "I've wanted this for a long time."

He sent him a fond look. "Most people would think this was invasive, Simon."

They're missing out. Simon shrugged, before tearing off his shirt quickly.

Oh. Soap flung his head on his pillow, trembling faintly as his firm chest was exposed to him. *You're an insatiable menace.*

Simon smirked, undoing the fastens on his own jeans slowly. *Making up for lost time, love.*

Rather than pull his jeans down, he suddenly pulled impatiently at Soap's sweatshirt, and he huffed, lifting himself and pulling it off. Simon pressed him back down, crawling over him and running his greedy hands over his abdomen, grinning when his skin jumped under his touch.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Simon lowered his head, smirking evilly at Soap's astonished, slackened face, before he cupped his clothed cock and swiped the flat of his tongue along the length of him.

"Simon," he gasped in surprise, and then bit into the palm of his hand.

Can't have the guards investigating, Johnny. His sweet laughter curled around his mind, as the fucker sucked relentlessly on his concealed cock.

Where'd you learn that, Soap whined, writhing into his hot, eager mouth.

Simon presented his own view, looking down at his straining prick silhouetted through the grey material of his bottoms, and the overwhelming desire to suck, to taste and consume every inch of Soap's body. *I wanted to.*

Soap bit into his palm, hard.

I wonder, is it my body now, too, technically? Simon thought darkly, mouthing at the dampness in the material. *Since our souls aren't separate anymore?*

What the fuck, Simon. Removing his hand from his mouth, Soap groaned, "Please don't get philosophical about our souls with your mouth so close to my cock, you mad man."

Rolling his eyes, Simon yanked his sweats and pants down his legs, and Soap stared gormlessly, obediently lifting his hips and allowing himself to be divested of his clothes.

Soon he was lying naked on his back before his soulmate, his leaking cock a heavy line against his middle, his skin prickling under Simon's heavy, scrutinous gaze.

Why do I feel more like the blushing virgin here?

"Dunno, Johnny," he murmured, pressing his huge hands against his thighs, pushing them wide apart. The sight of him shirtless in his jeans, looming confidently over him made his cock twitch eagerly. "Are you nervous, love?"

Soap shuddered, rolling his neck against his pillow. *What the fuck is happening to me.*

The subdued, silvery line of Simon's mark was proffered to his face, and Soap read the request easily, leaning up to lick his palm, tracing his fused soul with a sigh. Simon breathed a soft groan at the feeling, before he leant back, wrapping his wet palm around Soap's cock -

"*Fuck,* " Soap cried, clutching the threadbare sheet tight in his fists, rocking himself eagerly into his fist. Soap stared desperately up at his lidded, hungry eyes, whispering his name as he stroked him.

The small hints of light peeking from Simon's palm as he gripped his cock twinged at something feral in his brain, and he could feel the edge of his self control breaking apart. Simon watched his strained, shuddering form with parted lips.

So eager, Johnny.

Soap hummed, smiling at him as he pumped him steadily, watching the motions as though hypnotised.

Cover your mouth, love, Simon ordered, eyes dark and warm.

Soap sighed, and obediently complied, pressing his mark to his mouth.

When Simon licked a bead of pre-cum off of his slit and wrapped his lips around his head, Soap bit down painfully into his mark, pawing mindlessly at Simon's hair. He felt Simon's coiling lust and satisfaction as if it was his own, as he slid greedily down, and Soap whined into the flesh of his palm.

If Soap's mind wandered too much, he could feel the sensation of Simon's tongue as if it was his own, and taste his own flavour even as he felt the delightful swirl of his tongue on his cock. Simon moaned around him, and Soap keened. *Bleeding Christ.*

When Simon curled a hand around his cock and slid his mouth slowly up, Soap released his palm from his mouth wetly.

"Simon, darling, you're so pretty," he slurred, carding his fingers through his hair. "My pretty boy soulmate," he garbled, humming dreamily when Simon laughed in surprise around his mouthful. "I'd call you a bonnie lass, but you're not a woman, but you're just as pretty, no, definitely more pretty-"

You're rambling, love. He lapped at his head relentlessly for a moment, before he sank back down on him again. Soap moaned high and loud, uncaring of who heard it, gripping Simon's hair tight.

"Can I call you love, too?" Soap prattled eagerly, groaning when Simon accidentally choked on his cock. "Hng, no. That's your thing, I'll call you gràdh."

It means the same thing, Johnny.

Soap beamed dopily. *How'd' you know?*

Simon lifted his mouth slowly off his cock, and Soap rolled his neck against the pillow, out of his mind from the filthy visual. His hips twitched up, missing his warmth already.

"I can understand all of your," *nonsense*, "interesting turns of phrase now."

"Fucking Brits," Soap grumbled.

Will you tell me what you like, Johnny? He asked innocently, running his tongue wickedly along the underside of his cock. Soap's legs

trembled, hips bucking as he gasped a breathless moan.

I like you, Soap thought instantly, grabbing mindlessly at Simon's warm shoulders. *I like you a lot*.

That's good, love. Simon's eyes creased at him in amusement, his lips shiny and swollen where they slid up and down his sensitive cock. *Anything else?*

No, Soap sighed internally. *Just you*.

Simon hummed around his cock, and Soap's mind leaked like a broken tap.

How much, love?

Like a lot, gràdh. Soap pulled at his hair, and Simon allowed his mouth to be pulled off of his cock. He watched himself bob desperately towards his mouth with a groan.

Soap wasn't sure if it was his lifetime of a complete absence of any familial affection, or the numerous transactional and perfunctory sexual encounters he'd had, but he'd never felt more adored and wanted in his life.

This odd, menacing spectre with the quiet, fractured romantic heart, who'd schemed and waited just to meet him - who he knew just from peering into his mind would do just about anything to nurture what they had and keep them safe.

Simon's quietly amused face pulled something blissfully tight in his chest, and he didn't bother curtailing his thoughts when they popped into his mind. There would be no secrets between them, not with their minds so inexorably intertwined.

I think I love you, Simon, he thought softly, swallowing harshly as he watched Simon for his reaction. *That's a bit soon, isn't it?*

It was very soon, but so was indelibly merging their very hearts and minds together. This just seemed like the natural progression of things.

The amusement drained from Simon's face entirely, leaving only a blank, eerie slate of nothing.

Just like old times, Soap thought nervously, stroking his hair softly.

Simon?

Simon blinked owlishly, eyes fluttering delicately as he struggled to comprehend his words.

The other man's ecstatic disbelief suddenly danced across Soap's heart, and he smiled tentatively.

He 'oofed' when Simon crawled up his body and dropped himself heavily on top of him, Soap trapped supine underneath him. "Simon?"

Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, his laughing voice fluttered in his mind. *You love me, too?*

Soap huffed happily, pressing his face into his messy hair. "Aye, gràdh," he whispered bashfully. A thought suddenly struck him, and he clarified, "You don't have to sa-"

"Love you, Johnny," he said dreamily, pressing his mouth on his chest, right above his heart.

His mind was invaded by Simon's many lonely years, secretly reading soulmate novels in the darkened corners of the base, tenuously dreaming of his own other half. He'd had flashes in his dreams of a deep Scottish burr, a sunny laugh, and luminous, clear blue eyes that seemed to look at him and see *everything*.

Another vision, this time of Soap on his first day, sitting at Simon's table, looking miserable and unsure. But then he looked up at him, blue eyes wide, the pupil shrunk to nothing, so artlessly beautiful, and then he spoke with that voice -

Hello, love, Simon's mind had whispered, shaken and awed. *You're finally here.*

You knew it was me immediately? Soap thought wondrously, then frowned. *Why'd you sit so far away then?*

I would know you anywhere, Johnny. Simon curled his arms around his back, breathing a shaky laugh, a suspicious wetness pooling on his skin. *Didn't want to scare you off.*

What a sook, Soap thought without heat, grinning hugely.

Simon's stormy face flashed in his view for a moment, before he was spreading his legs wide and gorging on his cock again. Just a few pulls

of his hot, sucking mouth and Soap was ready to twist off the mattress.

The heady sounds of Simon's suffocating, wet gasps as he sank too much of his mouth onto his cock made his hips buck inadvertently, and Simon choked harder.

"Fuck's sake, Simon," he babbled mindlessly, grappling at his head until Simon pulled off, eyes watering. *You're gonna hurt yourself, pretty man.*

The sweet flush to Simon's cheekbones reminded him just how new this all was to him, and lit something foul in Soap's core. Soap stroked over his flushed skin, smiling soothingly as he caught his breath.

Simon's lip twisted up wickedly, even as his eyes remained limpid and sincere. *Want to be good for you, Johnny.*

The devious and sincere edge to that statement made him groan. *You know exactly what that does to me, don't you?*

"Course I do," Simon said in a rough husk, and Christ was his voice that hoarse just from blowing him? He sucked absently at the underside, staring deeply into Soap's eyes as he trailed his wet lips up and down his cock. He sucked loudly and wetly on his sensitive glands, humming when Soap pulsed small pearly lines down onto his tongue.

Simon, he said desperately, watching with huge eyes. *I'm going to come if you keep going.*

Could you come again, if you do? Simon asked curiously, eyes lidded as he mouthed downward. Soap could sense that he had zero intent to stop until Soap had come just from his mouth sucking him down.

Bleeding fucking Christ.

Simon curled his hand around the base of him and ran his slick head over his open mouth, eyes glazed as he sucked hot, teasing kisses to his slit. He smoothly stroked the length of him, his hand wet with spit and Soap's own leaking desire. He wrapped his pink lips around his tip and fluttered his tongue relentlessly over his frenulum as his hand moved in a tight, slick grip, curling his free hand over an open thigh and pressing his leg further apart.

Exposed on his back, Soap was receiving the best blow job of his life

by someone who'd never even touched another man's prick before that moment.

What the fuck is in those books of yours, you menace, Soap whined, covering his eyes with his hands, the sight of him too overwhelming for words. *Too good at this.*

Dreamt of this moment for so long, Simon's voice was desperate and fractured in his own mind, enraptured by Soap's wild responsiveness. *Told you I wanted it to be good, Johnny.*

Simon had caught onto the stray desirous ramblings in Soap's brain - his obsession with his pretty face, choking so lovingly on his cock, his lips and chin a mess from his exertions. He was planning something, but he'd blocked it neatly from Soap's view.

What are you up to, pretty man? Soap garbled, adoration coiling sweetly in his heart, as his orgasm rose alongside it. *You're so good at this, you'll probably fuck me perfectly the first time too, you're so good, gràdh.*

He'd felt a tiny undercurrent of Simon's earlier fears, that this would go terribly, that Soap wouldn't enjoy his inexperienced overtures but -

Soap saw what Simon saw, how he twisted and turned on his back, begging him mindlessly, all of his adoration pouring desperately through his mind. Soap was a raw nerve, frantic and sensitive and everything he could've hoped for.

"Thank you, pretty man," Soap rambled mindlessly, petting his flaxen locks and moaning at a particularly forceful suck on his tip. "Gonna come soon," he breathed.

Warn me, will you? Simon stroked faster, pressing firm circles into his jumping inner thigh.

"I'll try, I'll try," Soap babbled, smiling dazedly down at him. His lidded eyes creased at him, and his mind went deliciously blank.

Simon, he warned -

The other man's eyes darkened as he watched him keenly, undulating his tongue in a persistent swirl over his glands.

He saw a flash of Simon's marked hand gliding hot and slick over his cock, his soulmate's possessive eyes pinning him heavily to the bed,

and his pleasure snapped like a cord in his core, back arching into the heat of his mouth as his climax shuddered over him.

Soap let out a guttural moan as his orgasm shook his thighs, feeling his release curling up his cock, watching Simon's swollen mouth pop off of his head- *What?*

Simon directed his spilling cock to his flushed cheekbones, smirking as Soap cried out in disbelief, watching himself pulse heavy lines of his release onto his perfect, blushing face.

He moved his throbbing cock across his face to his other cheek, before resting his twitching head against open mouth, milking the final remnants with his hand onto his tongue and moaning obscenely at his flavour.

Simon, Simon, Simon. Soap heaved desperately, gripping harshly onto his hair and pressing his tip insistently onto his tongue with a sigh. *You let me ruin your pretty face,* Soap thought dopily, trailing a reverent hand over his jaw and thumbing at the pearly streaks coating his cheeks. *You're even prettier like this, Simon.*

The other man shivered bodily, and Soap could sense his bone deep pleasure, to feel the physical remnants of Soap's lust painted warmly onto his face, and how much he'd love to do the same to Soap -

He pulled Simon off his cock, and sat up, cradling his head and pressing his mouth against his in a decadent kiss. He could taste himself overwhelmingly in his mouth and smell himself on his face, and he groaned in deep satisfaction, mark warming contentedly.

Finally mine, Simon, he purred, pulling away and licking his spend from one of his blushing cheeks, chuckling when Simon moaned desperately. *Will you fuck me now?*

"Yes," Simon said instantly, wrapping his arms around him and nuzzling against his forehead. *Want to be inside you.*

+

When Johnny set his eyes on Simon's straining cock, he could almost see the other man regretting his offer. Johnny's lidded, fearful gaze made him twitch evilly, and when Johnny curled his hand around him, Simon hummed.

Johnny's nervous thought trickled into his mind, *You're going to split*

me apart, gràdh.

He felt himself grow harder in his grasp, and smirked at Johnny's mortified blink.

He proffered up his commissary bag to Johnny with a minor flourish, trying and failing to suppress his pleased smile at his soulmate's flabbergasted face. *You really thought of everything, devious man.*

Soon Johnny was splayed on his back again, legs spread wide, eyes aching on Simon as he slipped his own lubed fingers in and out of himself.

Simon knelt at the bottom of the bunk, holding his cock tight at the root to stop himself from coming just from the filthy sight of him, moaning quietly as his hole opened up slowly but surely under his own keen fingers.

After he'd relentlessly stretched himself out, Johnny was on his knees, crawling over and kissing Simon sweetly and reassuringly as his thoughts bubbled warmly through his mind.

Are you ready, gràdh?

Simon yanked an arm around him and deepened the kiss, grinning at his startled yelp. *Are you, Johnny?*

Johnny patted impatiently at his shoulders and arranged him on his rear, and soon Simon was arranged in a sitting position on the pillows, his legs straight across the bed.

Easier for me to adjust to you, this way, Johnny explained absently, watching his lubed hands intently.

Simon smirked at him, slowly massaging the slick onto his glistening cock and shifting his hips in invitation. *Come sit on my lap, love.*

He watched Johnny's eyes shutter, a sweet daze fogging his face as he crawled into his lap, curling his hands around his shoulders. Simon enveloped him in his arms, stroking at his naked spine and parting his rear suggestively.

Simon pressed on his tailbone until he landed firmly in the cradle of his hips, Johnny gasping when he slipped his slickened cock between his cheeks. He tightened his arms around his neck and cooed softly, writhing as Simon rocked up and eased his cock teasingly between his

globes, fluttering his head over his slackened entrance.

“Simon,” he mumbled, pressing kisses over his cheeks, uncaring of the dried spend on his face. “Need it.”

He grasped at his cock, pressing his mushroom tip to his hole, teasing forceful circles against his rim. Johnny squirmed, trying to sink down onto him, but Simon let himself catch on him only briefly before he slid away, sliding up and down his globes and trailing his slick across his skin.

He repeated the motion again and again, kissing Johnny to muffle his desperate pleas, rubbing his spine in soothing swipes.

When he prodded his glossy head against his hole again, Johnny sank down desperately, expecting him to slip away, but Simon gripped his hip and pressed inside in a tight thrust, his entrance snapping slickly over his glands. Johnny cried out in surprise, blues huge and wild as his nails bit his shoulders.

The muscles in his arms were pulled taut where they gripped onto Johnny’s hips, wanting desperately to sink inside the tight warmth of him, but cautious of hurting him. He pressed a curious finger to where they were joined, flexing his cock deliberately to watch Johnny’s stammering sigh.

Move for me now, Johnny, he pleaded, licking the sweat from the column of his neck. *Or I’ll press you down and fuck you through the pain.*

Johnny hummed dreamily, licking his lips as he tentatively eased down his cock. “You can if you want,” he breathed softly into his ear, curling his fingers into Simon’s hair, breath catching as he took more inside. “Whatever you want, Simon.”

He shuddered, his fractured soul splintering at the words. *Don’t say things you don’t mean, Johnny*, he warned roughly.

Johnny pressed soft open-mouthed kisses to his face, before he paused to toss his head wantonly back, moaning long and loud as he sank inch by inch down Simon’s cock, not stopping until he was bottomed out inside of his molten, fluttering heat.

“Jesus Chri - *Johnny* .”

I do mean it, Simon.

Simon shuddered, pressing his fingers to their joining again, feeling Johnny's stretched hole tighten at his prodding and groaning. "Took me so easily," he laughed brokenly. "Just like your eager little soul," he whispered smugly.

Move for me, sweet thing.

Johnny immediately complied, and Simon held onto his arse as he slipped himself fully up to his tip and slid easily back down again, making little grunting noise every time he bottomed out, mouth parted charmingly.

"Should've been weeks, Johnny," he needled him breathlessly, watching his cock fill eagerly against their grinding bodies. "But you were here, what, one night?" He laughed cruelly, fisting Johnny's hair and pinning his limpid blues with his own. "And now you're already bouncing on my cock less than a week later."

"Simon," he cried weakly, increasing his pace wildly as Simon joined him, thrusting up instinctively into the sucking heat of him.

"Is it good, love?" Simon asked roughly, grasping onto his flanks and thrusting up into him. "Like being stuffed full of my cock?"

Simon. His face was wrecked, sweat dripping from his pores, eyes liquid and glazed. *Never wanna leave.*

"That's good, there's nowhere else for you to go," he said darkly as he pulled gently out, finally giving into the urge and pressing him down onto his back. Johnny obediently parted his legs, and Simon laughed quietly, hooking his arm under his back and sheathing himself easily back into Johnny.

Thought it would hurt, love? He asked innocently, grinning wildly at Johnny's mortified cries.

His hole was a slick, vice grip on his cock, and it unshackled his atrocious mouth to see Johnny so desperate and easy for him.

"I could've crawled into your bed on the first few nights," Simon suggested haltingly, pressing his torso down onto Johnny and pinning him with his weight. He rolled his hips in long, full strokes, whispering praise when Johnny wrapped his legs around his thrusting hips. "Would you have let me?"

Johnny gazed sightlessly at him, clenching his slick hole around him,

his own cock smearing wet slimy trails against Simon's shifting abdomen. *Answer me, love.*

"Aye," Johnny stammered, shame and adoration writ large on his face.

"Would've kept the mask on," he growled, watching Johnny's fluttering eyes. "Made you come on my hand and used it as lube to fuck you." He grew harder at the thought of Johnny's uncertain but welcoming body, parting so easily for him due to the undeniable link in their souls. "Wouldn't have even hurt you that much, looking at you now."

Johnny writhed and whined beneath him, desperate little gasps puffing out of him, eyes wide and adoring. "Bet your soul would've opened then and there," Simon whispered, feeling his cock throb sickeningly at the idea as he stroked in and out of him. "You would've looked so sweet and confused, your soul opening up nice and wide while I stretched you nice and full with my cock."

He pressed their lips together, catching Johnny's sinful cries, revelling in the desperate clench of his thighs and the insistent twitch of his length trapped between their sweating bodies.

He could sense Johnny's second orgasm was cresting, the teasing friction on his cock and his relentless penetration teetering him close to the edge.

"Could've taken my glove off and bonded you there." Simon's voice was a frenzied rasp, and he pounded into Johnny with reckless abandon, no longer worried about his inexperience. "You would've let me do it."

Johnny moaned an affirmation, breath harsh and fast between them, tossing his head side to side on the bed.

Look at me, Johnny, he thought deliberately, staring into his loving, clouded eyes. *Your body, your heart, everything is mine now.*

Johnny's eyes rolled back, and he allowed the full weight of his satisfaction, his victory to pour through their bond as he joined their mouths in a decadent kiss.

I'll take such good care of it all, love.

Johnny's legs and arms clutched desperately at him as he cried out

into his mouth, his hole clenching in hard pulses as he came beautifully on his cock. Simon pulled back to watch his mindless twisting, the tension in his muscles snapping as his pleasure washed over him.

Simon fucked him relentlessly through his orgasm, curling his hand around his spilling cock and milking him even when Johnny tried to arch out of his touch, his arms falling back to the bed. His debauched wails, the slap of their skin together, and the sight of Johnny's marked hand at rest above his head quickly put him in a tails핀.

But it was Johnny's sweaty smile, watching him dazedly through the throes of his own orgasm, that took him past the precipice.

He buried his cock fully to the hilt, grinding his hips in mindless circles as he cried Johnny's name, keeping his desperate eyes on his soulmate's adoring smile as his hole eagerly milked him for all he was worth.

Johnny's fluttering hands, pressing soothing sweeps along his back added to the buzzing pleasure down his spine, and his knees buckled as he collapsed on top of him. He laid there for a time breathless and winded, heart beating rapidly in his chest.

Simon could feel himself pulsing slowly into him even then, and rested his sweaty face on Johnny's chest, enjoying his racing pulse in his ears.

"Are you still coming?" Johnny's flabbergasted voice wavered through the air.

He groaned in deep satisfaction, rocking gently into him. "Been a while since I have." He kissed his chest, rolling his neck in delight.

You're not about to tell me you've never wanked, Johnny thought with great exasperation. It would explain your madness quite well, though.

"I haven't had a cellmate until now." Simon rolled his eyes up at him. "And I don't wank in public like you do."

You're about three steps removed from calling me a depraved slut, Simon.

Simon leaned up lazily, softened cock still sheathed inside of his overflowing hole, and pressed a soft kiss to Johnny's mouth. He pulled gently away, smiling at his slackened expression, fingering the leaking spend around their joining.

“You are a depraved slut, Johnny,” he assured him sweetly, laughing at his small moan. *Not even feigning outrage.* “Only for me, though.”

I don't think that's what that means, thou-

Simon silenced him with a kiss, blinking away the adoring, joyous tears that threatened his eyes. He pulled away softly, leaning into the hand cradling his jaw with a swallow.

Everything I ever wanted, he thought, chest catching with emotion as he looked at Johnny's mischievous smile. *And you're all mine.*

+

The lockdown lasted until the next day, and Simon smiled secretly at every loud gurgle of Johnny's stomach.

“Surely this is a human rights violation,” he groaned dramatically into his naked chest. “I'm starving.”

Simon petted his rumbling stomach soothingly. “If you were so concerned about your meals, why'd you always forget them, then?”

Johnny flailed in his arms, but Simon held tight, smiling into his wild and matted hair. *Sex hair*, he thought smugly. Johnny's sly face peaked up at him from his chest.

“Why bother, when I had a hot, masked killer following me around, giving me extra food in bed if I was ever hungry.”

He felt something dark unfurling in his gut, his hands tightening on Johnny's naked body. He pressed hot kisses down his throat, humming when Johnny squirmed eagerly under his sucking mouth. He pulled away wetly.

“Are you trying to make me *jealous* of myself?” Simon asked roughly, pleased and envious in equal measure.

“No?” Johnny paused, before he grinned wickedly. “Are you?”

Yes. The traitorous thought slipped through his mind, but that was alright. He was still working out the details of their next step, but he wanted it all figured out before he let his beloved know - as long as that stayed concealed for now, he didn't mind these little parts slipping out.

Johnny pulled Simon warmly into his arms, raining kisses onto his

amused face. "Coorie in, mad man, I still love you just as much as him."

He paused his barrage of kisses, gleaming eyes darkening with wry suspicion. *Why do you feel more smug than usual, Simon?*

"I was just thinking," Simon said slowly. "It's my birthday soon."

His immediately intrigued eyes warmed him, and Simon rewarded him with a soft kiss. *So eager to please me, aren't you?*

What can I give you? Johnny tilted his head. *Bit limited in prison*, he thought apologetically.

"Who said it had to be in prison?" He said quietly, voice small. Johnny's face fell, but he recovered immediately and smiled slightly, pressing a kiss to his cheek. *Oh, Simon.*

Simon swallowed, then opened his mouth and let all of his desires spill out of him.

"I didn't care that I was imprisoned, not until you arrived," he admitted honestly. "But I have so many things I want to do now that I have you, that I can't do here."

Johnny listened patiently, head turned to him on their pillow. If Simon blurred his eyes, he could almost imagine they were in bed in some imaginary home of their making, rather than the cold, narrow bunk of their cell.

"I want to make love to you in the sun," he confessed in a low murmur, watching Johnny's lips part in surprise. "Someplace far from here, where you can move and make as much noise as you want, and I can take care of you properly."

He felt his ardent desire for it well in his eyes, and he sighed low and long, frustrated with himself. "That's what I want, Johnny."

Would you give it to me? He asked softly. *If you could?*

"If I could, Simon," he croaked wetly, before smiling widely. "Silly romantic sook, you should've thought of that before you got yourself locked up for so long."

Johnny pressed his teary blues into his shoulder, and Simon hummed, cuddling eagerly into him.

Blocking his thoughts slyly, he thought quietly to himself. *But I did, love.* He pressed his mouth to his, relishing Johnny's warm and easy affection, his plans slowly swirling in his mind.

Did you really think I was going to let you waste away in here, once I had you, Johnny?

Chapter End Notes

So I feel like this can end here just fine, but as is the case with most of my one shots, there's room for a second part, but I do not want to have another yWIP floating around. I would say there's a 80% chance that I will do something considering that ending, but leaving it complete in case I don't get to it <3

Prison AUs are just highschool AUs with a touch more death and crime, and you can't change my mind on this.

Please let me know what you guys thought! I about killed myself working on this beast - it's honestly a WIP worthy idea smashed into a huge oneshot, but I just wanted the complete idea explored NOW.

~

Didn't bother with translations this time, I figured it'd be too long by the time anyone got to this point.

+ [twit](#) +

New Dawn Fades

Chapter Notes

Hello!! Really appreciate the lovely response to what was SUPPOSED to be a one-shot.. Have 11k more words instead haha. I edited this on my iPad so please forgive anything super funky :')

Thank you so much to Tildabeans for lending me her Dave(s) <3 She wrote an amazing oneshot about their cell mates... overhearing their night together T-T

~

Chapter title inspired by 'New Dawn Fades' by Joy Division.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A lanky, bespectacled man in a three piece suit stood by a towering arched window, watching the rain sluice down the panes as he spoke into his mobile.

"It's an election year, so I'm sure you can understand the urgency," he said, closing his steely grey eyes in brief irritation. "The CIA is threatening to release it to the press. The Prime Minister will be displeased if this interferes with his campaigning, given that his opponent is a soulmate rights lawyer."

The man's voice rushed to placate him from the receiver, "I understand, Miles, but the other one is unstable, if the public finds out about this -"

"They won't." Miles swirled his beverage in a leisurely circle. "They're not being freed, they'll still be in our custody." He stared at the amber liquid for a moment as he collected his thoughts. "Should anything go wrong, we'll put them down."

"It's a big risk," the other man sighed. "If he kills someone..."

"Frankly, if they do slip up and kill someone, that will only help the Prime Minister's chances," Miles said lightly. "Make it happen, and quickly, if you please. If this gets out while they're still in chains." He trailed off deliberately, the threat implicit in his tone.

"I understand sir."

Miles hung up and threw his phone on the hotel bed. He turned to the tv, its light flashing colour across the darkened space as he sank down onto the edge of the mattress.

On screen, the Prime Minister's opponent was shrieking about human rights violations to a tumultuous sea of people, her passion energising the masses and whipping them up into a frenzy.

"How can the Prime Minister stand idly by..."

"...Miscarriage of justice..."

"...Cannot be thrown under the same umbrella as us ...we need systemic change..."

Miles clicked off the TV with an eye roll. "Nonsense."

Finishing the last of his drink, he picked up his phone once more and made yet another call.

+ +

It took a few days before the prison schedule returned to normal, and after a day or two in lockdown, Soap wasn't particularly keen to venture out into the snake pit again.

The little cocoon with Simon had been blissful, and he'd enjoyed their little world together while he could. The only interaction with the guards they had was when they slipped in food parcels in the door slot - otherwise, it was just the two of them.

Soap's tacky, filthy skin was protesting the lack of shower though, and there were only so many sink showers he could take.

When Simon finally had to part ways with him for work, he was unbearably, adorably clingy about the temporary separation.

"Don't use the showers without me," Simon lectured, pressing a kiss to his face between orders. "Stay near the guards, if you have to be out there." Another kiss, this time to his brow. "And for fuck's sake, stay away from the Graveyard, Johnny-"

Soap ignored all of it, a question lingering heavily on his mind. "What do you do for work? I never see you around the Croft," he interrupted thoughtfully.

Simon paused, looking slightly bashful. "Not hard work," he said reluctantly. "I'm in the art studio."

"That's work?" *How do you get away with this?* Soap thought incredulously. *Are you even a prisoner here?*

"I'm the volunteer instructor," Simon muttered stormily. "They noticed I was good at it, and they're too understaffed as it is, so-" He shrugged dismissively.

The image of Simon stalking around a bunch of ragtag prisoners in his mask, while they splattered violence and misery across their canvases struck Soap as unfairly hysterical, and he said as much.

"You should join, when you get the chance." Simon deliberately ignored his gleeful snickers. "Can keep an eye on you, then."

Soap was thrilled for a moment, before he deflated in disappointment. "Oh - thought you wanted to paint me like one of your French girls."

"My what?" Simon sounded perplexed.

"You haven't seen-?" He projected his recollection of the movie to him, and Simon blinked in incomprehension, before his cheeks pinkened delightfully.

An image appeared in Soap's mind, of himself lying naked and supine on a fine lounge, a silk throw pooled artfully at his waste, while Simon watched hungrily from afar, his canvas soundly ignored, the paintbrush lax between his fingers as he drank him in -

When he shook the image away, Simon was blushing furiously, gaze studiously averted.

Did I give you another fantasy, mo ghràdh? He wondered smugly.

Simon's cold hands curled greedily around his waist. *All the more reason to get you out of here, love.*

Soap jolted. *What?*

"I've been making some calls, while you were passed out," he said smugly, thinking about Soap's resting form, mouth and stomach slick from Simon's spend - too sleepy to rouse after his ardent attentions. "Lazy thing," Simon whispered.

You wore me out, Soap accused, mouth twisting down in a petulant

moue. *You're insatiable.*

Simon smirked at him, rubbing his sides warmly.

What are you planning? Soap tilted his head at him suspiciously. *Not staging a prison break, are you?*

The trill of the work bell interrupted his interrogation, and Simon pressed their lips together, sighing sadly into his mouth.

Later, Johnny, he promised. *Stay out of trouble.*

+

Soap didn't have to wait long to find out what his scheming soulmate had been up to.

When Officer Sahan called him into his office, the man looked as though he'd aged several calendar years in the span of only a few days.

"I've had calls from the CIA, the Armed Forces and the Prime Minister's office in the last twenty four hours," Sahan said without preamble, and Soap froze in his chair.

What the hell have you done, Simon?

Soap wasn't certain of the radius of their mind reading capabilities, but he hoped Simon could sense his growing agitation while he played art teacher for his miserable students.

Sahan didn't wait for his reaction.

"They want to release your soulmate," Sahan said with great frustration, thrumming his fingers anxiously against his desk. "The reasons are classified - and I'm expected to just sit back and allow that to happen."

The ground was disintegrating beneath him, and he clutched at the seat rests as reality warped around him.

Released? His chest was tight with brittle hope. *They want to let Simon out?*

He killed a couple involved in something big, involved with one of our targets, he remembered quietly. *Is this Laswell's doing?*

Sahan's furious eyes swivelled to him. "And you, MacTavish," he said gravely. "You were in this very room only days ago, begging me to move you - and now I find out he's your soulmate, not from either of you, but from someone at the C. I. bloody A?"

Word travels fast, he thought weakly.

"We were in lockdown," Soap said with a wince, mind still whirring from the bombardment of revelations. Not like anyone came to check to see if he was murdering me, he thought with sullenly. "Si- Ghost must've called someone."

Sahan shook his head, leaning back in his leather chair and peering at a note on his computer with irritation. "Your contacts are cleared for security - Katherine Larkin is requesting you call her."

Katherine...Laswell? He merely blinked when the connection formed in his mind. *Guess it'd be strange to have someone from the CIA calling a prisoner.*

Soap nodded, and moved to leave, but sat back down when the other man waved him back down.

Sahan levelled him with a considering look. "You haven't asked."

What? "What?"

Sahan explained, eyes narrowed, "They want to release him, but I've heard nothing about you."

Ah. Soap raised his eyes to the ceiling momentarily. He tried not to think about a future where he was left alone in prison, never able to see his soulmate again, after so long apart -

It makes sense, he thought quietly. *After what I did, they wouldn't let me out early.*

Soap straightened his spine. "I haven't been involved in any of these conversations," he said honestly. "I don't fully understand what's going on, just yet."

But I will, mo ghràdh, he promised stormily.

+

Soap was grateful for his lax new prisoner schedule, and he marched back to his cell the moment he could, anxious irritation bubbling in

his middle.

He leaned against the wall with the prison phone's cable coiled around his arm when he finally got a hold of Katherine.

"Sergeant," Laswell said warmly, and he jolted bodily at the title.

Soap cleared his throat awkwardly. "Not a Sergeant anymore," he corrected automatically, then grimaced at his rudeness. "Sorry, how have you been, Kate?"

Not calling you bloody Larkin, he grumbled.

"I've been busy, John," she said knowingly, and he cringed at the name.

Ugh, that's what you call Price.

"I don't have long," she said, tone flattening solemnly. "I'm sure you've heard that Ghost should be released shortly."

Soap nodded dazedly, before he remembered she couldn't see him. "Aye," he croaked roughly. He hurriedly cleared his throat. "Don't know how you managed that. When is he out?"

"Not important," she said urgently, and Soap's eye twitched. *Knowing when they're going to tear the other half of my soul away from me is very important-*

Laswell continued, "We've been working on securing your release too, that's been a trickier process, but it sounds like we're nearly there."

He had so many questions, but all he could think to blurt was, "Without even talking to me?"

She laughed lightly. "I told both of you during your sentencing - I had specialist lawyers on hand, and even though you both said no, they've been building your cases from the beginning. It's been harder now that you've both been found guilty, but not insurmountable."

Hell's bloody fucking bells, Soap thought woozily. *The devil works hard, but Laswell works harder.*

The guilt and denial loomed heavily in his mind. *Why would she work so hard to release me, after what I did?*

"I've got to go," Laswell murmured after a lengthy silence. "Take care,

John.”

An automated message from the HM Manchester Prison phone service chirped happily over the line, and Soap clicked the phone back into the receiver with unseeing eyes.

+

Awash with mixed emotions, come lunchtime, Soap did not wait for Simon outside of the mess hall as planned, and instead lined up with the sea of raucous inmates.

A table of miscreants frowned at him as he wandered through the mess, but Soap ignored them, pivoting on his heel to his usual table. Just as he passed them, though, someone moaned ominously over the fray in their best Count Dracula voice, “Here comes, the bride of Ghost.”

Soap stopped in his tracks and whirled on them. “The fuck are you wallopers on about?”

Though clearly not expecting audience interaction, they were not deterred by his stony glare. “Dave here thought you was dying in your cell.” One lad nodded solemnly at his balding compatriot. “Lot of moaning and caterwauling.”

Dave spluttered defensively. “He sounded like he was dying.”

“You’ve obviously never pleased a lass properly, then,” the other man snickered, before he turned his sly eyes to Soap. “Ghost sounds like he’s taking care of his wife real well.”

It was one thing to have his soul spill out in front of the entire prison population, but to have them discuss his sex noises was somehow far more mortifying.

Their words registered like a blow to the head.

“Did you daft fuckers just say wife?” Soap growled, hands tightening painfully around his tray.

“You ain’t never heard of a prison wife?” Dave gloated with a leer. “You get his protection, and in return-”

Not-Dave interrupted smugly, “You perform your wifely duties.” He turned to Dave. “Think he gets off on fucking someone else’s

soulmate?”

“Yeah - it’s smart of him,” Dave nodded thoughtfully, ignoring Soap’s incredulous look of disgust. “Can’t get away with killing the marked blighter in here, but taking him as his wife is probably worse - I’m sure his soulmate would want nothin’ to do with him now that he’s all used up.”

Soap could feel his eyes widen in an enraged stare, heart thudding wet and loud in his ribcage, as he considered the logistics of luring them both down to the Graveyard and showing them first hand exactly what *someone dying really sounded like* -

Are they bothering you, Johnny? Simon’s voice drifted serenely across his mind.

No, no, I can handle it, Soap hissed as his chest heaved ominously, but judging from both the Daves’ blanched faces, his soulmate was already on his way. *Simon,* he thought with agitation.

You’re okay, love, he soothed, and he snapped his head up at his approaching soulmate. His eyes were warm and encouraging behind the mask, and the fog of rage parted under that kind gaze.

What the fuck is wrong with me?

Soap vacantly registered Simon directing him away from the terrified Daves, and leading him swiftly to their darkened table. Sitting in his seat, he frowned down at his vile looking meal.

He’d never been this quick to vicious anger like that before, although the potential of it had always lurked beneath the surface. It had only come out in extreme circumstances though - not from an exchange as childish as this.

It seemed like his anger had worsened since.

Since...

Simon brushed against his side. *Since you joined your soul with mine, Johnny,* he said regretfully. *It’s affecting you now.*

The fractured, crumbling shape of Simon’s soul had combined with Soap’s, and it was as though it had eroded most of his usual fastidious control. It was a small price to pay, Soap decided, as the warmth of Simon’s presence soundly smothered his rage.

I asked for all of you, Simon, Soap murmured softly in his mind. I don't regret any of it.

He could sense Simon making a vow to himself, to do whatever it took to keep Soap's joyous light intact, and protect it from his own madness as much as he could.

My light? He smiled up at him, suppressing his grin whilst they were stuck amongst the general rabble. *I remember your hand lighting up too, sweet sook.*

Not like yours. Simon's eyes had a wild, manic light to them. *I told you your soul was mine to take care of,* he reminded darkly. *I'll take care of you, Johnny.*

Soap's previous anger at him faded under such a declaration, and he merely felt drained, as he toyed with his food. *We need to talk, Simon.* He projected his morning conversations calmly to him, watching his soulmate's shoulders stiffen imperceptibly.

+

They both had a free hour before Simon had to return to work, so Soap led him quietly to the library to talk.

Why can't we go back to bed, Simon asked sulkily, projecting an image of Soap being enfolded bodily in his arms on their bunk.

Soap looked at him fondly. *Aren't you sick of our cell after being stuck in there for days?*

Simon's enjoyment of their time together was incandescent in his mind. *Not really, I was stuck in there with you, Johnny.*

Rolling his eyes, Soap tried and failed to suppress his smile as he watched Ghost settle into an armchair. He faltered when he noted the unusual activity levels in the library, all of the chairs now occupied.

You can sit on my lap, Johnny, he purred, and Soap shivered.

Been doing plenty of that already. He chided. *They already think I'm your wife, let's not make it any worse.*

Although he couldn't see his face, he knew his soulmate had the most obnoxious smirk animating his features behind his mask. Soap sighed and leant against his armrest instead.

Would you like that? Simon asked slyly, tilting his head up at him eagerly. *If you were my bride?*

Not particularly. Soap laughed as Simon's head and shoulders slumped in disappointment. *But husband, maybe.*

Simon's head shot up in wonder, but Soap was distracted by the curious eyes of inmates peering at them from behind a stack of bookshelves, and picked up the nearest books he could find.

Pretend to read. He chuckled a small pink novel at Simon, and opened up his own book to a random page.

The wave of surprised joy, then crushing displeasure emanating from Simon was highly distracting. *What's the matter with you?*

Simon waved the pink book at him. *This.*

What about it? Soap asked with fond exasperation. He bent over to inspect the cover. *Oh, look, a soulmate romance, isn't that your favourite?*

It's fine, Simon muttered grumpily, and Soap puzzled through his vague disappointed musings to figure out the source of his discontent.

Ah. His tone was thoughtful. *Not enough male couples?*

No, Simon said forcefully, and Soap had the sense that he was gearing up to talk his ear off about the subject, but the ticking of the wall clock reminded him of his purpose.

Tell me later? He projected his adoration to him as he murmured, "I was called to Sahan's office this morning."

Simon had already seen his exchanges with both Sahan and Laswell in his mind, and Soap could detect his disappointment at not being the one to tell him.

You're lucky you didn't. Soap turned a page sharply. *I wasn't happy - I can't believe you did all of that without telling me, Simon.*

It's not like that, Johnny, he said urgently. *I just wanted to be sure it was possible, but Laswell moved fast.*

The tumultuous guilt that had been building inside was spilling into his mind before he could contain it.

I deserve to be here Simon. He said finally, blinking away the image of his father's open chest cavity with a shudder. *I can't come back from something like that.*

Simon's voice in his mind was all frustration. *We've both killed people before.*

It's not the same and you know it. Soap flipped a page aggressively, and winced when it tore loudly.

There was a long, tense silence in his mind as he stared with unseeing eyes at the page. He startled when his marked palm was enveloped in Simon's, and he tried to pull away, but he held fast.

His thumb pressed gently into his mark, and Soap's shoulders softened. He pressed against the mangled, scarred flesh of his palm when he uttered, *He was abusing you for most of your life, Johnny.*

Soap flinched, his mind recoiling violently. He did not want to think about any of that, at all.

You saw what happened, he wasn't threatening me when I killed him.

He hurt you. Simon's stirring anger ignited his own, and Soap clenched his teeth. *You shouldn't be punished for eliminating that scum, Johnny.*

A fine haze of rage dimmed his vision, the book going slack in his grasp.

You don't know what's best for me, and you don't get to make these decisions for me, Simon. Soap's agitation was roiling through him, and he blinked furiously at the page, trying to get his enraged breathing under control.

"Johnny," Simon whispered, regret instantly dousing his anger. "I'm sorry, love."

Just look at me Simon, he insisted, looking down at him with vibrating, animal eyes. *What happens if I go out there and kill someone - I was ready to take out those two fuckwits over nothing.*

It's only been a few days. Simon tugged on his hand, trying to pull him into his lap, but Soap stubbornly resisted. *I'll help you, love.*

Soap's wild anger wasn't interested in answers, though - he was a fire, and his soulmate's input was oxygen fanning the flames.

The work bell trilled, and Simon discarded the book and stood alongside Soap, who was ready to storm off, but was stopped when he was swiftly enfolded in a tight hug.

“Don’t,” Soap hissed, trying to furiously shake him off for a moment, before he sank bodily into his embrace anyway, his rage smouldering softly in his arms. *Can’t let them see.*

Simon simply held him tighter. “They already know you’re mine, Johnny.”

With the fury easing from his mind, the sorrow eagerly replaced it. *I’m sorry, Simon.*

Don’t be. When Soap pulled back, he could see the regret clouding his eyes. *You’re right, I should’ve told you, but -*

“It’s too late now,” Soap concluded wearily, gently stepping out of his orbit.

+

Soap had only just begun to grapple with his new reality inside Strangeways Prison, when he was taken with Simon the following morning to discuss their upcoming release.

I thought Laswell wasn’t sure about me yet, he thought nervously, following Officer Sahan with Simon close by his side.

When they turned the corner and found Laswell dressed smartly in a prison corridor, Soap stared with wide eyes, the sight of his former ally twisting his insides wistfully.

Her eyes smiled at them, but her face remained impassive as she spoke, “Don’t speak at all, unless directed to by Nadine.” She looked between them both gravely. “Your releases are all but certain - but it’s best to let her handle it.”

The room they were taken to was an unfamiliar one, a boardroom of sorts with a long wood veneer table stretched across the space. On one side, a tall, well dressed man in a suit and glasses stood, smiling tightly at their arrival. A severe looking man in all black sat at the table, not looking up from his paperwork when they entered.

A dark haired woman, Nadine, sat on the other, a lawyer who Soap recalled was well versed in their admittedly limited rights as

soulmarked people. She offered a cool smile, and waved them both to sit near her side.

Several manilla folders and leather bound binders were neatly spread across the table, acting as a bureaucratic divider between the two parties.

Simon sat next to him, his restless anticipation buzzing under both of their skin.

Steady on, Simon, he murmured.

Miles, who offered no last name, referred to himself as a representative of the Crown, and his stern companion a lawyer whose name Soap immediately forgot.

When Miles joined the table, it was a whirlwind of legalese and thinly veiled disdain from that point onward. Soap bore witness to it all with a growing sense of nausea and unease.

“The particulars of their release have been mostly settled,” Miles said around a thin smile. “You were quite,” He paused as he looked at Laswell. “Convincing, in that regard.”

Sniffing, he continued, “But we will not release them without safeguards, in the interest of public safety.”

Nadine narrowed her eyes. “And what safeguards are those, exactly?” Her voice was sharp as she accepted the sheaf of paper from the other lawyer.

Miles nodded at the pile with a lazy brow. “You’ll find it all in there, but in the interest of haste,” he said slowly, and she waved at him to continue. “Quite frankly, we cannot afford two bonded veterans to be kept in custody, given the optics, but we cannot simply unleash them onto the public.”

Soap listened to it all with rising alarm, wondering just how this had garnered interest from so many people of import.

“They will be released into the Crown’s custody, wherein they will serve out the remainder of their sentences in service to their country,” he droned, and Soap had to stop himself from grasping onto his soulmate in disbelief.

Simon’s hope dawned with his own. Their shared room in the 141

flashed headily in both of their minds.

Laswell's voice cut through the air. "With Task Force 141, presumably? They were both stationed there before their incarceration."

Miles' smile was tight, and with two words, he sank their mutual fantasy, "Not quite."

"Mr Riley will be released into Captain Price's custody, yes," Miles amended with a nod. "But we will be putting Mr MacTavish to use elsewhere."

Simon's dissatisfied refusal was bubbling in his insides, but Soap pressed his foot firmly onto his own.

Don't, Simon, he warned sternly. *Just listen.*

Nadine's voice was unimpressed. "Separating a bonded pair?"

Miles smiled thinly, undeterred. "Only temporarily," he said lightly, finally deigning to look at Soap for the first time. His expression didn't outwardly change, however Soap felt uncomfortably pinned by those cold, grey eyes.

"There is the matter of Mr MacTavish's crime." His gaze remained steadily on Soap, and he distantly registered Simon's shoulders stiffening by his side.

"You yourself cleared his release," Laswell warned, but he shook his head.

"Yes, yes, that's all well and good," he dismissed. "But the nature of his crime - the excessive violence and cruelty of it, cannot simply be ignored."

His ears rang, a low tone setting his teeth on edge as his body tensed. He had the vague sense that Simon was railing against his words in their shared consciousness, but it was lost in the general air of malaise that swept through his brain.

Soap's chest burned with shame, and he could only stare back hopelessly as Miles continued, "We are quite assured of Mr Riley's mental faculties, but the same can't be said about you, John."

The use of his first name was barely registered in the litany of

discomforts he was faced with.

They know what he did to you, Simon raged in his mind, and Soap fought hard to keep his own cool under the onslaught. *You're not a dangerous fucking animal.*

"We will set you on an assignment for a few months - nothing dangerous - basic intelligence work." Miles finally looked at Nadine. "It's a simple test of his control. If he can cope without his soulmate and complete the task with no incidents, then we can be confident he can be slowly introduced back into the armed forces once more."

Nadine asked bluntly, "And if he can't?"

"We can renegotiate should that come to pass," Miles said simply. "We have not outlined any terms in the instance that he might fail, in good faith." He smiled magnanimously. "We have full confidence that it won't come to that."

If they have full confidence, then you should be with me, Simon seethed, but anything else he said was lost in the muddle that was his own mind.

The negotiations continued unabated as he stared sightlessly at his marked palm, a pervasive sense of dread snaking around his heart.

The irony was, if he hadn't bonded with Simon, he would've been perfectly fine.

His father's murder was a loss of control on his part, but it had been a build up of years of abuse, coupled with the instinctual drive to find his soulmate, that led to that perfect storm of violence.

But with their souls intertwined, Soap was not so confident he could cope with even a basic task such as this, if it meant being separated from Simon's stabilising influence.

They were wrong to assume he was a risk because of his murder - it was the bond that had quietly shredded his self control, and he wasn't sure he could keep himself under wraps, not without time and practise. Neither of which he had.

When it finally came down to their decision, Simon's voice drifted darkly into his mind.

I don't like this, Simon said balefully, but the acceptance was already

heavy in his mind.

Soap's reply was a quiet admonishment. *You asked for this, mo ghràdh.*

Simon's lips turned down, but he signed his paperwork anyway, handing over the pen with pained eyes.

He hesitated, his pen hovering over the page, as a recent promise flashed in his mind.

A dream of the sun, and a home of their own making, where Simon could take care of them both. It was what Simon wanted, more than anything.

Would you give it to me? Simon had asked softly. If you could?

He had replied instantly.

If I could, Simon.

He watched himself sign the page as if in slow motion, quietly wondering if he was making a terrible mistake as the marked papers were secured and set aside, their futures indelibly signed away with it.

+

The misery permeating from Simon's end was dragging him down, compounding his fear and doubt about the situation.

When he asked to sleep alone that night, Simon's face had been utterly crestfallen, and he'd immediately begged for forgiveness, panic lashing their shared bond.

But Soap had been resolute. He'd explained to him it wasn't punishment, but he needed space to think, after everything that had occurred. It was hard to do so, with Simon hearing everything he thought, otherwise.

In the dark of his cell, he'd blocked their connection, and tried to ignore the palpably distressed silence from above him for doing so. "Just need to think, Simon," he reiterated softly.

"Can't you do it next to me?" Simon's voice was small and rough with emotion, and the sound of it sharply pierced his heart, negating his previous determination entirely. Soap twisted out of his sheets and scrambled up into the top bunk, grunting when warm arms hefted him

over the edge.

Simon's eyes were red rimmed and sinking with tears, and Soap was immediately relieved that he gave in when he did. The idea of leaving him up here like this would've been unbearable, no matter how justified he was to be upset with him.

"Thank you," Simon whispered hoarsely, and Soap hid his face in his neck, sniffing when his arms engulfed him in a tight hold.

"Still need to think," he warned wetly, leaning back to level him with a stern look. "Can't get anything done with you prattling in my head," he whispered affectionately.

His soulmate's lips turned up into a tiny smile. "I like being inside you," he goaded suggestively, but the effect was instantly ruined by his clogged nose and wet voice.

Soap laughed, patting his cheek fondly. "Aye, what a needy sook you are," he whispered. "No one out there would ever be scared of you, if they could see you like this."

Simon leaned into his touch, a tear spilling from his eye. "It's only for you, Johnny." His lips turned up into a proper grin. "You like keeping me all to yourself anyway - I've seen inside your head."

Something about his teary, smug look stirred his heart, and Soap planted a kiss on the corner of that smile with a laugh. "Stop distracting me, Simon."

Hands slid under his shirt, winding up his spine before drifting down into his waistband, firmly squeezing his arse. When Soap whimpered, Simon murmured eagerly, "Is it working?" He pressed open mouth kisses up his neck, grinding into Soap suggestively as he squirmed under his attention.

"Ugh," Soap groaned, clutching onto his sides. "Not when I know people are listening."

The smug look he shot him made him roll his eyes. "They understand," Simon coaxed, curling his hand around Soap's jaw. "Just taking care of your needs, love."

"Heard them, did you?" Soap grumbled, allowing himself to be manoeuvred onto his back anyway. Simon pulled up his own shirt off before he tugged at Soap's, and he watched it all with a sigh.

"I'm not unblocking it tonight, Simon," he said gently.

His lips twisted, but he continued leisurely undressing Soap anyway. "That's alright," he said, running his greedy hands over his revealed torso. He sucked hard on a nipple, causing Soap to gasp, and slowly divested him of his pants. "I'll just tell you how good you feel the old fashioned way."

Christ.

They eventually migrated down to the bottom bunk, when their need for lube became urgent, and the obvious rattling of the top level became difficult to ignore.

When Simon eventually had him on his back, legs pressed as wide as they could manage in their tiny bed, he slid, slow and slick inside with a quiet groan. Soap shifted, amazed at the solid length of him in his insides, biting his lip as he adjusted to his size.

Simon rested his weight onto him, his torso flush with Soap, and kissed his already sweating brow. "Your noises are mine tonight, since you're so shy about it," he murmured, pulling back as far as he could and back again, rolling his body in a wave over Soap's as he slowly rocked into him. "I'll keep you quiet, if you can't manage it," he needled with a smug smile.

Not shy, he wanted to bite out, but he was too busy trying not to gasp with pleasure.

Unwilling to admit that he doubted he'd be able to control his volume even if he tried, Soap accepted the challenge with a shuddering, "Aye, alright."

Rather than sit up on his knees, Simon remained flush with Soap, kissing his face as he took him slowly, whispering filthy praise in his ear as he undulated their bodies tightly together.

Smothered in Simon's weight and scent, Soap curled his limbs tightly around him, moaning breathily in his ear and grinning when his stroking motions faltered. "Still want me quiet?" he teased into the shell of his ear, whining when Simon bumped against his prostate. Simon groaned, pulling back slightly to look down at him as he thrust slowly.

Simon's face was red, from exertion or blushing he couldn't say, lips parted as he watched Soap's soft moans and fracturing expression. "Or

is this alright?" he cooed, and Simon growled, lengthening his strokes but maintaining his torturous pace as he pressed his full weight down onto him again.

"Perfect thing," he praised roughly, caging him with his arms and pinning Soap with his wild gaze. "Make such pretty little sounds for me, don't you?" He groaned, pulling a cheek apart as he ground his cock against Soap's prostate again.

Soap garbled hopelessly, back arching desperately, "Pretty - what?"

"It's true," Simon insisted with a huffing laugh. "So high and sweet." He gave the most god awful, curling grin down at him as he twisted into him with a punishing thrust, eliciting another quiet, keening moan from Soap. "No wonder they mistook you for my wife, Johnny." Simon grasped at Soap's left hand, sucking his ring finger up into his mouth and creasing his smug eyes down at him.

"I'll fucking," Soap gasped as Simon curled his other hand around his cock. "I'll fucking k-kill you, mo ghràdh."

He pulled his finger out of his mouth with a snicker. "I think that's my job, love." Simon grinned when he whined, fisting his cock tightly and spreading his own pre-cum across his length. "Does it feel like dying, pretty thing?"

Soap clutched at his arms, wanting to look away from his amused, flushed face, but unwilling to back down.

"You're the pretty boy here," Soap insisted, and he tried to make it sound like an insult, but it came out breathy and sincere out of his mouth.

Simon kissed him lazily, chuckling as he parted. "Very sweet, Johnny."

Hngg, smug fucking bastard. He almost considered unblocking the connection to tell him as much, but he wouldn't let him win.

"You're a bloody menace," Soap whined petulantly. "I was supposed to be by myself tonight, not let you touch me."

The dark, creeping smirk on Simon's face made the pleasure coiling in his body tighten. "Of course you're meant to be here with me," he said with total assurance, eyes still swollen from his recent tears. He leant down to murmur into Soap's ear, "Begging in my ears, desperate to

come for me, fucking hell, just look at you.” Soap writhed at the soft darkness pouring into him, whimpering his name and panting soft, whiny moans.

“This is where you should be every night, Johnny,” Simon said roughly, sliding hot and wet into his welcoming heat. “Stretched around my cock and taking everything I give until I’m all you ever think about again.”

He moaned helplessly, “Fuck, Simon.” He was too loud that time, and Simon muffled the noise with a brief, messy kiss.

“When you’re out there without me, on that fucking mission,” he grunted, gently tilting Soap’s head until he was pinned by his animal eyes. “When you’re alone at night, want you to touch yourself and think of me,” Simon said roughly, voice deep and breathless. “Only me.”

Soap cried out as the pace of Simon’s hand on his cock grew faster, the slapping sound loud and obvious in the dark cell.

“Just me, Johnny,” he whispered, breathing hard against his panting mouth. “Promise me.”

“You, Simon,” he agreed haltingly. “Just you,” he whined, and he was rewarded with a groaning kiss.

His fucking was slow and slick, and Soap moaned under the weight of his desperate eyes, clenching his hole tight around him with every stroke, biting his nails into his shifting shoulder blades. “Fuck, Johnny,” he groaned, resting his head against his as he slid his hands under Soap’s back. “Gonna be dreaming of your sweet little noises every night.”

Soap’s eyes fluttered as his breath hitched, the muscles in his thighs quivering as he latched on tighter to Simon, orgasm rushing headlong to the surface.

He came with a sharp stuttering cry, Simon’s name hushed on his lips as his soulmate fucked him slowly through the waves, marked hand catching his spend as he stroked him through. Soap’s hole squeezed Simon’s cock in a slick vice, and Simon followed quickly after, clutching Soap’s shuddering body tight to him as he bit down hard into the flesh of his shoulder.

Soap didn’t realise he was still moaning breathily into Simon’s ears

until the other man groaned a pleased hum, kissing his lax mouth as he roped his release inside his fluttering entrance.

Eventually his rocking motions stilled, and he simply held Soap close, grasping his marked palm in his own as he kissed him leisurely. When they parted, Soap held onto his neck, staring dreamily up at him as the pleasant lethargy settled warm and thick in his blood.

“You were a virgin all of three days ago, Simon,” Soap reminded him in an aimless, slurring burr, cuddling his sweaty bulk close with a hum. “Magic books, those things,” he whispered. “Even if there weren’t enough male soulmates.”

Simon groaned and allowed his full weight to fall on him, nosing his cheek. “Maybe a good thing there weren’t that many men - wouldn’t have been as effective.” He snickered cheekily, kissing his nose, “Since I’ve been saddled with a pretty little wife instead.”

“SIMON,” Soap’s outraged laugh tore out of his mouth, but it was muffled by the guffawing mouth pressed to his.

Eventually Soap pulled the blanket over their cooling bodies, mumbling something about taking a shower the next day in lieu of cleaning up. He fell asleep with Simon warm around him, a kernel of hope blossoming in his chest as he dreamed of the future, with a house in the sun and his soulmate by his side.

Neither of them realised it, but it would be their last night ever spent in Strangeways prison. If Soap had known that was likely the last chance he’d ever get to sleep next to Simon for the rest of his life, he would’ve happily remained locked away in that wretched cell for all eternity.

+

In the small hours of the morning, their cell was unceremoniously opened, and an unfamiliar guard, alongside Officer Figs, ushered them out of the space without warning.

Only after the two had quickly dressed, much to Figs’ exasperation.

Before long, Soap’s personal belongings, minimal though they were, had been shoved into his arms, and he was out of his grey sweats and back into his regular clothing in a flash. He grimaced at the slick pooling out of his body as he changed clothes, cursing his sleepy laziness heavily.

Simon remained dressed in all black, his skull mask watching him quietly as they traversed through the prison release process. Soap had yet to unblock their connection in the flurry of activity, and by the time he'd thought to do so, they were already being led outside to their transports.

Miles himself stood waiting by a sleek, black Mercedes Benz, looking wide awake and severe despite the late hour.

Wrapped in a beanie and suede jacket, Captain Price stood by a more utilitarian vehicle parked by his side, and Soap almost stopped dead in his tracks at the sight of him.

It's real, Soap thought in quiet disbelief. *We're actually leaving.*

Price nodded at them both, but Miles spoke before he had the chance to greet them.

"With me, if you please, John," he said impatiently. His driver opened the backseat door, but Simon gripped his arm in a panic before he could think to approach.

Miles watched the motion with a raised brow. "We will all meet shortly at the airport, there will be plenty of time for goodbyes then."

Soap snapped his eyes to Simon's, whose eyes were equally terrified behind his mask.

I thought we'd have more time.

"Johnny," he whispered tightly, but Soap could only shake his head at him, as Miles coughed impatiently in the background.

"Later, Simon," he promised softly, and Simon let go, hand flexing in the air between them as he pulled gently away.

Soap walked numbly towards the car with that suffocating dread coiling tight over his heart once more.

+

Soap joined Miles in the backseat, sliding clumsily along the buttery smooth leather as the car sped away from HM Manchester Prison.

Although he'd blocked their connection, Soap discovered that his mere physical presence must've been enough to soothe the ragged edges of his own deformed soul. As the journey progressed, his chest tightened,

and the agitation crept easily over his senses, making him fidget in his seat as he grappled with the unfamiliar distress clouding his mind.

Miles levelled him an assessing stare, and Soap cursed himself. He was already failing the test, failing Simon, and they had only been apart for mere moments.

They drove deeper into Manchester, and much to his dismay, after only a few minutes the car was slowly creeping along the curb in the darkened city streets.

They arrived at the dilapidated remains of the Hulme Hippodrome, a decrepit and abandoned old theatre, its red bricked exterior sprayed with graffiti and fading murals. Miles wordlessly exited the vehicle, and Soap scrambled to follow, heart picking up speed as they crunched towards the seedy building.

Irritated, Soap gave in to his urge to finally question his taciturn and stuffy handler. "What are we doing here?"

"Patience," Miles said shortly, and soon he was led inside, stepping over debris and glass until the halls opened up into the main auditorium. The space was illuminated by a harsh, white floodlight which stood towering on the main floor, under which sat a simple folded chair, clearly a recent addition to the ageing building.

The stage had collapsed in on itself, and the light cast odd shadows against the red velvet, gold trimmed walls, the thousands of empty seats making Soap oddly nervous.

What are we doing here? He spun in a small circle, impressed with the decaying space despite the sinister air to their arrival.

"You'll remember Theodore," Miles said shortly, and the lawyer in the black suit stepped out of the shadows, blocking the light as he stepped onto the main floor. "He'll be joining us for your briefing."

I didn't remember, actually. Soap's heart was racing now as he took stock of his situation. *Bleedin' Christ, I didn't even notice you were here.*

Miles pointed at the folded out chair in invitation, and Soap simply stared, feeling as though he'd been herded neatly into a trap.

"T's not a request," Theo murmured, and Soap was sure he hadn't sounded Scottish in that boardroom. Soap had barely registered him at all, but he took keen note of him now.

Short with brown, short hair, his eyes seemed almost black in the dark, decrepit space, as he gazed blankly at Soap.

Knowing he was trapped but not willing to concede an inch, Soap crossed his arms and politely declined the seat, staring steadily at Miles even as a lurking maelstrom of anger bubbled in the wings of his mind.

The smile that twisted up Miles lips was decidedly patronising, and he gave a light shrug at Soap's stubbornness. "Theodore is an agent from MI6 who will be joining you, to ensure that you complete your task to satisfaction."

Couldn't have told me this in a less dramatic setting? Soap thought dully.

"For intelligence work, you said?" Soap questioned coolly. "Seems excessive."

"Ah yes, that is only an incidental part of the job, admittedly." Miles gave him a condescending look. "Are you sure you won't sit down?"

Get on with it, Soap snarled inwardly, eye twitching with repressed irritation.

"As it happens, your target is a rogue MI6 agent, who turned tail and joined Al-Qatala in recent months." Soap startled at the information, slowly uncrossing his arms.

Far, far more than intel gathering, then.

My target? He thought nervously. *I've been wasting away since my first sentence hearing, then prison. They can't expect me to take on something like this.*

"Do you think yourself above a little wetwork, John?" Miles needed lightly, as Soap stared incredulously. "Given your past history that seems an odd line to draw."

"It's not my specialty, no," Soap said through gritted teeth.

Miles ignored his comment, and continued on undeterred.

"Had our hand not been forced, you would never have been released early," he said wistfully. "Riley is a useful tool, however, and we'd prefer him not wasting away in chains when he'd be better served elsewhere."

He smiled tightly at Soap, and he felt the miraculous veil of their quick release from prison disintegrate before his eyes.

Of course.

Their reluctance to release Soap, the concern over his stability, and this sinister, clandestine meeting, away from prying eyes. A terrible picture was being painted in his mind, one where he got on that plane and never, ever came back.

Chilling disappointment sank heavily in him. *They were never going to let me be free with you, Simon.*

Miles seemed content to fill the silence, while Soap spiralled internally.

“Had you not lost control of yourself so spectacularly, you would be there with him in Kate’s little Task Force.” Miles rolled his eyes, and Soap flinched.

No one to blame but myself. He thought with ragged despair, a cold chill settling in his bones.

“We can’t afford you running amok in our distinguished Armed Forces.” He smiled deeply. “A rabid cur such as yourself can still be of some use, however.” He nodded at Theodore, who passed Soap a hefty folder.

A rabid cur. He opened it numbly, flipping through each page with growing dread.

It held extensive knowledge on the target, the dangerous locations they often frequented, and their close association with the brutal Al-Qatala. It would be a mission fit for the entire 141 and then some, not a washed up soldier with an eviscerated soul weighing him down.

He could picture himself lying in his inevitable, unmarked grave, the soil slowly cascading over his foetid corpse.

Soap sifted through the intel, and the deeper he looked, the harder the soil fell over his head.

“What makes you so sure I’ll even be able to do any of this?” Soap couldn’t hide the wavering agitation in his voice. “I’ve been out of action for long enough as it is.”

Theodore interjected boredly, "Only a few months, no more than your allocated leave time."

"Much like riding a bike, I'm sure," Miles agreed, and Soap was about ready to deck the self satisfied bastard then and there.

He would never be able to do this alone, not if he wanted to survive it, anyway.

His hands froze as he turned the page, the idea sticky and relentless in his mind, as he tried to rationalise it away.

Deciding he had nothing to lose by, Soap voiced his fears bluntly aloud, "This is a suicide mission."

"Correct," Miles agreed easily.

Ah.

There were dust motes swirling in the beam of white light, Soap noted distantly. He wondered how safe it was to breathe in any amount of this decrepit building, before he remembered his life expectancy was shrinking by the minute, anyway.

"As I said, we were greatly reluctant to release you," Miles said, pulling his arms behind his back. "Given the increased interest in your kind's... rights, it would be risky to just put you down and be done with it. This way you go out being of some use to society." His tone was sickeningly magnanimous.

How generous. Soap was going to be sick.

"Before you rail against me, and waste all of our time," Miles added boredly. "If you do not perform to the best of your ability - if the target is not destroyed as directed, rest assured we will find a way to end your soulmate in a way that will not draw the public's eye."

Horror and rage slicked his veins, as the walls caved in on him. "I thought he was the useful tool you wanted?" Soap pressed desperately.

"We would prefer not to," Miles agreed. "But think of it as an incentive. You will likely die, but you'll be protecting your soulmate in the process," he said the word as if it tasted particularly vile on the way out, mouth twisting in disgust. "And you'll guarantee him his life, back with his comrades - a far better future than prison, and what he

would desire most, no?"

Simon's tender hopes had filtered through their bond in the days locked in with him, all of his imaginings of the future- it was a far quieter, sweeter picture than anything Soap would've ever dared dreamed for himself.

Soap thought of their imaginary house in the sun with quiet anguish. *No, this isn't what he would've wanted at all.*

"He's never going to be a tool for any of you, not when he finds out what you're planning," Soap said, anger bolstering his words. None of them will.

Miles' genteel voice turned ice, "That is why you will not reveal any of this information to any of them." He stepped closer, and Soap bared his teeth at his approach. "When you die, he will grieve, I'm sure - but the work will be a welcome distraction to direct all of his attention to."

We've traded one prison for another. Soap clenched his jaw. *We never should have signed up for this.*

"You will keep your goodbye short, and verbal," Miles ordered darkly. "If we sense that you are communicating via other means." He raised his eyebrows meaningfully. "We will find a way to kill him first."

Christ no. He was shaking imperceptibly now, the black seeping the blue from his eyes as his mark screamed for release. The files were loosening in his hands as his vision wavered dangerously.

They're going to kill him.

His consciousness was buckling, the leash on his rage pulling taut, ready to snap at any moment.

"Careful now, John," Miles whispered keenly, eyes narrowing behind his spectacles. "Any more of that, and Theodore here will put a bullet in your brain right now. You do want to see your soulmate one more time, don't you?"

Through the fury building in his mind, he'd missed the silenced weapon being levelled in his direction, the dark eyed Scot eyeing him calmly behind the barrel.

Have to stay calm, he begged himself, even as he stared down the

chamber with a sneer. *For Simon, to keep him safe.*

The promise of his soulmate's safety smothered his blind rage in an instant.

Soap's shoulders dropped, and when he blinked a few times, his eyes were slowly turning blue once more.

"Good," Miles said, stepping closer until Soap was forced to stare up at his grey eyes with poorly suppressed despair. "Now come along, there's work to be done."

+

Soap was transported to the designated RAF airport alone, once his briefing was complete.

"Keep yourself under control," Miles had chided sharply, as Soap entered the unmarked transport. "And keep your connection locked down when you arrive. You know what will happen if you don't."

Alone in the back of the truck, with only an hour until he saw Simon for the last time, Soap crushed his palms to his eyes and wept silently, anger and grief choking him until he was near breathless.

I can't give you that dream, mo ghràdh, he thought brokenly, shoulders crumpling as he huddled pathetically in his seat.

They'd barely had any time together, only a scant few, precious days, and even though it was in a vermin infested prison, they'd been the happiest days of his life.

I hope you never find out why. He stared at his silvery, scarred palm, watching the tears blot its surface as they dripped from his lashes.

He knew that Simon's, their fragile soul, couldn't take the knowledge that he'd been sent to his death, and that he'd been helpless to stop it.

Regardless of the cause of his death, he knew Simon would blame himself for dreaming too big, for ever thinking they'd ever be welcome to live freely in the way that he desired, in the softest depths of his heart.

Soap feared that even if he executed the mission to an impossible standard level of perfection and died as required, Simon wouldn't stop until he'd uncovered every last gory detail about his final moments.

And if he did, his life would be forfeit too.

Just let it rest, let it be a tragic accident, he begged quietly. Something blameless - a mission going wrong. It happens all the time.

With the airport fast approaching, Soap pulled himself together with one last sniff.

They can't know anything's wrong. He squeezed his eyes shut, willing the swelling to fade, and scrubbing roughly at his face.

You promised to protect me. Soap wiped a hand over his eyes, breath shuddering as he struggled to regulate his breathing. *Let me do the same for you, Simon,* he promised quietly, tracing the edge of his mark with a finger.

+

When the car slowed to a stop on the tarmac, Soap slowly slid out, shouldering his camo duffle bag as he followed his nameless minder to the lone private charter plane.

The dawn was breaking over the horizon, and the grass lining the edges of the runway was blanketed with frost, his breath misting out in white puffs as he walked slowly to his end.

Price's truck was parked close by, and he almost crumpled then and there at the figures lying in wait.

Laswell, Price and Gaz were huddled by the vehicle, their heads tilted towards each other as they conversed quietly.

Christ, not all of you, too. He thought, horrified and sadly pleased all at once. It was one thing to have to say goodbye to his soulmate, but all of the people who'd ever cared about him at the same time, too?

And they wouldn't know it was for good.

Their heads turned up at his approach, and Gaz grinned widely at the sight of him.

"Oi, there's the man himself," he cried, breaking from the group to pull him into a painful hug. Overwhelmed, Soap was slow to pull his arms around him, blinking numbly as Gaz slapped him jovially on the shoulders. "Where have you been, work started weeks ago."

"In prison, you absolute weapon," Soap laughed despite himself, heart

aching fondly.

Gaz smirked unrepentantly. "Excuses," he snickered, and he distantly noticed Laswell and Price approach, all smiles at their banter.

They're so pleased, he thought quietly. Of course they would be, though.

It was almost too good to be true, to have them released so seamlessly. Unfortunately, they wouldn't realise just how treacherous that little deal had turned out to be.

"So I hear wherever they're sending you is classified." Gaz's eyebrows were raised casually, but his eyes were sharp, hoping to glean some clue from Soap's expression as to what he'd be doing.

Soap thought of Simon's charming blushes, and allowed it to fuel the small, relaxed smile on his face.

"Invitation only, Gaz," he said slyly, chest tightening painfully as he spoke. "If you have to ask..."

Gaz sighed loudly, and Price stepped in to shake Soap on the shoulder. "Good to see you, Soap," he said warmly, and the urge to give in, to tell his Captain everything, was overpowering -

You can't risk it, he reminded himself sternly. You promised to keep Simon safe.

Pathetically, Price was probably the closest thing to a true father figure he'd ever had, and the other man would never know just how important his short presence in his life had been to him.

Telling him now would just tip him off, he thought dully.

"Aye, you too, Captain." He smiled genuinely, and was grateful when Kate pulled him into a hug.

He didn't think hugging was a thing for them, but maybe working so hard to break them both out of prison changed things for her.

A car door shut, and Soap tensed, gently pulling away from Kate, willing his hold on his end of the bond to stay shut as Simon's heavy gait approached from the other side of Price's truck.

Were you steeling yourself for our goodbye, sweet sook? Soap thought painfully, as Simon approached the group unmasked, his eyes swollen and puffy as he locked eyes with Soap.

“Oh,” Gaz said quietly, looking wildly at Price and Kate, who appeared wholly unaffected by his quiet approach.

It took a moment for Soap to realise. *Gaz hasn't seen your face before, and it's ruined with tears*, he thought softly.

For a brief moment, he wondered if their reunion would go unobserved after all, when a near silent Mercedes Benz purred into view, and Miles and Theodore themselves unfolded from the backseat.

Can't even have this, can I? Resigned, he turned back to Simon, who hadn't once looked away from him.

Miles offered a polite greeting as he approached them all, but Soap avoided his eyes, keeping his eyes fixed on Simon instead. *Your eyes are so pretty, mo ghràdh*, he thought with quiet longing, wanting to stay on the other end of that gaze forever.

“You will be departing shortly, John,” Miles said quietly, and to everyone else it would be a gentle reminder, but Soap saw the threat implicit in his words.

The longer I stay, the more I risk your life, Simon.

Gaz, Price and Kate had politely backed away, giving the two space to say goodbye, but Miles stayed unerringly in earshot. He appeared to be busy on his sleek mobile phone, but Soap knew he would be focused entirely on them.

Theodore was nowhere in sight, he realised. *Didn't even notice the fucker disappearing even in the light of day.*

“Are you going to keep blocking me, Johnny?” Simon asked wetly, and Soap could have wept in pained relief.

See, it's blocked. He projected all of his rage towards the hateful figure shadowing their last, precious moments together. *Evil fucking ghoul.*

Soap swallowed, and put on a brave smile. I'm sorry, Simon, I don't want to do this.

“I don't think I could handle your sappy emotions on top of my own, mo ghràdh,” he admitted honestly, crowding closer and huffing softly when Simon eagerly took his hands. “Can't focus with you prattling in my head.”

Simon nodded tearfully, lips trembling slightly. "It's not for long, I s'pose," he said weakly, sounding as though he was trying to convince himself. He looked at him with a fragile smile, lashes still brimming with tears. "Just miss you already."

Soap wrapped his arms around him, hiding his crumpling face in his shoulder.

Even if I wasn't about to die, he told himself insistently, shoulders shaking as he cried silently into his shirt. *I would be sad to leave you, even temporarily.*

Simon's arms engulfed him, and Soap shuddered, feeling his resolve straining as his doom loomed ever closer.

I don't want to go. The thoughts swirled desperately in his mind. *I don't want to go. Just let me stay with him, I'll be good, please, please-*

Miles' genteel voice cut through the air. "Wrap it up please, John, the cabin crew is waiting."

Soap tensed, hands clutching hard in the fabric of Simon's shirt as pure hatred boiled his brain.

I'll fucking kill you, he seethed in his mind, rage blackening his eyes, and for a brief moment he was going to just do it. He could picture it now, unleashing his mark and tackling that weedy, smug bastard down, and smashing his stunned face over and over into the tarmac until he just **stopped. Fucking. TALKING-**

There were lips pressing softly against his hair, and Soap's anger fizzled away easily as he remembered his silent promise to him. Still flush with his chest, he tilted his head up, and Simon smiled a watery smile down at him.

"Remember your promise, Johnny," Simon said, and Soap almost froze - but no, that promise to protect him was one he'd made quietly to himself. Simon smiled bashfully at Soap's confused face. "Last night," he said meaningfully, a delightful flush pinkening his cheeks.

The promise to think of him, when he was lonely in bed every night.

Shameless, greedy man. Soap giggled, but then he was sobbing, but that was fine, because so was Simon. *You're the same as me.*

He grappled his shoulders and pressed their crying mouths together,

keeping his eyes painfully open while Simon's closed, not willing to take his gaze away while he still had the chance to see him. Simon cradled his jaw and tilted his head just like Soap had taught him, and that simple gesture had the tears blurring his vision all over again.

Simon. He tried to imbue all of his love and gratitude into every brush of his lips, in the way he carded his fingers through his hair. *Simon.*

He knew if he'd never followed his mark, if he'd kept his head down and walked away from his father that night, they never would've found themselves in this mess.

But then I never would've met you. Blinking the salt furiously away, he tried to burn the image of Simon's face into his mind, the blurred figures of the others in the distance creating a perfect picture of the people he loved most in the world. A painful image that he could cherish until the end.

I don't regret it. He gently took Simon's marked hand in both of his hands, pulling it close to his mouth and pressing soft, reverent kisses to their combined souls. *I would do it all again, just to have the chance to meet you.*

"Pull yourself together, Johnny," Simon joked weepily, watching his kisses with warm eyes as tears dripped off his own jaw. "It's only temporary, I'll see you soo-"

"I love you, Simon," Soap interrupted softly, and Simon paused, looking utterly floored by the admission all over again. "I love," he coughed as anguish pinched his throat closed. "I love you," he whispered finally.

Simon crowded him, eyes concerned, and no -

He can't know, he can't figure this out.

"I'll think of you," he said with panicked, forced cheer. "Like I promised," he finished weakly, as Simon blinked owlshly down at him, leaning closer, and Soap was sure he'd ruined everything.

"Of course I love you too, Johnny," Simon said, giving him his favourite smirk as he held tight onto his hand. "Don't worry about me. I mean, they won't tell me where you're going," he grumbled sulkily, and Soap smiled weakly at the tone. "But you can call me as much as you want, I'm sure."

Trying to make me feel better, Soap realised suddenly. *I should be making this a good memory, and I'm just blubbing all over him.*

Miles shifted ominously in his periphery, and he knew it was finally the end.

Let me be selfish once more, Simon. He thought, with horrible, corrosive guilt. *I have to do this, I have to make you believe I'll be back.*

Throwing caution to the wind, he beamed at his soulmate, heartened when he instantly smiled back.

Holding Simon's hand, the wind blew softly across the field, and he allowed himself to enjoy the sight of it blowing his flaxen locks charmingly across his eyes.

"If I could give you one thing when I'm back," he asked lightly, watching Simon's eyes gleam with intrigue. "What would you want from me?"

"Marry me," Simon said instantly, blinking once in surprise and swallowing at his own blunt admission. "Please," he whispered, giving him a hopeful smile.

Soap's smile froze in place, before he darted forward, pressing a playful kiss to his cheek.

If I could, Simon.

"Should've known," he huffed fondly, taking in the astonished pleasure in his eyes, and the pink that had never faded once from his cheeks. "Aye, alright Simon - I'll marry you, when I get the chance."

He pressed a final, chaste kiss to Simon's mouth, before he quickly stepped away, sending a cheery wave at the others as he pivoted, blinking harshly as he walked rapidly past Miles and headed straight for the stairs of the plane.

The wind blew gently once more, and Soap allowed himself one last look at Simon's hopeful, smiling face from the landing before he turned, only allowing his face to crumple once he crossed the threshold into the dim light of the cabin.

Goodbye, mo ghràdh.

Simon stood on the tarmac, his despair fading as he touched the fading warmth on his cheek, the spot where Johnny had kissed and told him yes.

He undoubtedly would've stayed rooted in place, wondering at the power that one simple word had on his person, if Price hadn't eventually firmly lured him a safe distance away from the plane.

They all watched Johnny's plane taxi away, and Simon let the soft voices of his companions fade to the background as he watched his soulmate become a distant dot in the sky.

He trailed his ring finger across his mark, feeling hope for the future blooming bright inside him for the first time in decades.

All because of you. He brushed his own cheek once more, allowing a small, pleased smile to light his features. *I'll be waiting for you, Johnny.*

Chapter End Notes

FIN

Jk, there's a part 3 of course. I had good intentions to end it on the 2nd chapter, but I refuse to do TWO 20k chapters, that's just madness.

Monkey paw, you guys wanted them out of prison, right? :D

I can't take credit for Soap's soil falling ruminations, that's inspired from a Smiths lyric from 'I know it's over'.

You might be thinking, Limerence, why did Miles tell Soap about all this BEFORE he said goodbye - and risk him telling Simon and co.?

Well cuz he would probably go apeshit and take the plane down if they just Skyped him, and frankly, it's just more dramatic this way. Being threatened in a rundown old Edwardian Theatre? Just a better vibe, honestly.

Anyway, read the tags, my friends before you get your pitchforks out! :')

Please let me know what you thought - I'm a bit scared tbh, I don't think I've written an emotionally charged scene like that

before (I mean I hope it is, I cried writing it but I might just be weak generally lol)

Scottish

Aye - Yes

Walloper - Idiot

Weapon - Idiot

Mo ghràdh - My love

Silver Soul

Chapter Notes

God I'm so sorry for the extended wait - I was trying so hard to keep this to just 3 parts, but I couldn't do it without rushing through needlessly.

Remember when this was supposed to be a oneshot... :c

~

Title inspired by 'Silver Soul' by Beach House

TWs: Torture, canon typical violence.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As the distance between Soap and Simon grew, the sorrow that lurked within was inexplicably muted, morphing into a yawning pit of rage.

Unstable, Soap thought distantly.

He didn't know where the fear had gone, or all of the grief. It was still somewhere deep inside, a raw, scraped over nerve, but it wasn't all consuming as it had been on the tarmac.

Soap wondered just how catastrophically his mind might crumble, without Simon's steadying presence keeping his soul anchored. He'd been thoroughly altered by the bond, and neither of them had known what such separation would do.

He knew it was dangerous, just how untethered and cavalier his thoughts had become, but he couldn't find it within himself to care.

It was only Theo, the quiet and grim faced Scottish lawyer slash MI6 agent who had accompanied him on his suicide mission.

Miles remained safely tucked on the British Isles.

Not for long, something inside promised in a sibilant hiss, and Soap shut his swollen eyes, ostensibly to mourn his own impending demise.

He was far more concerned about hiding the pit of black that had surely eclipsed his irises.

It wouldn't do to be murdered on the plane before he'd even had the chance to be murdered on his mission.

Soap listened to Theo drone about the mission details, his mind many miles away. Not quite thousands, given he was only going to France.

Elijah Grafton, the MI6 agent Miles was so invested in seeing dead, resided in a home in the French Countryside. Not somewhere in Urzikstan as he'd come to expect from Al-Qatala.

He distantly recalled something about a worrying expansion into Europe by the terrorist group.

Like a fuckin' chain store, he thought idly.

+

In the hours following Soap's departure, Kate lingered in the Stirling Lines Army Garrison, the SAS base tucked away North-West of Herefordshire, an odd worry looming heavily in a dark corner of her mind.

Despite their overwhelming success in securing the release of Soap and Ghost, that same buzzing, paranoid instinct, a guiding light that had yet to fail her so far, had inexplicably not diminished despite their clear victory.

It had only worsened as time went on, and she couldn't discern why.

It was too easy, she decided.

Sitting opposite John's sterile, mahogany desk, she calmly gathered her thoughts. He waited patiently, gazing steadily back while he drank his coffee.

"It was too easy," she finally declared, leaning back into her seat. "Their release."

Happy to play counter to her thoughts, John raised a brow. "You specifically complained to me that they were playing hard ball." He set his coffee down. "Now it's too easy?"

"They were insistent they'd never let Soap go," she muttered thoughtfully. "Then they changed their mind almost overnight - had new terms drafted up for Nadine immediately."

Nadine and herself had gone over them closely, but had found nothing

in the details to raise alarm. It wasn't immediate freedom, but the terms were more than fair given the circumstances.

Serve out the rest of their sentences in service to the British Government, and then their debts would be paid. Given the men would've likely joined the 141 again if given the chance, it was a surprisingly neat end to their near tragic story.

None of them had been privy to the details of Soap's assignment, only that it was based in an isolated region in France. Kate had easily confirmed the plane's arrival in the south of France through publicly accessible flight data, but his movements beyond that were a mystery.

She hadn't looked into it. It wasn't in her nature to monitor their every assignment, especially work unrelated to the 141, and she couldn't afford to distrust every ally's agenda without evidence of misconduct.

I wish I had, now, she thought tensely. When Miles changed his tune, I should've questioned why.

Miles held an open disgust for the fantastical connection which bound the two men together; a common sentiment for the current elected government, she knew, but the brutality of Soap's crime seemed to bolster whatever negative opinion he had on their kind to another degree, and fuelled his insistence he had to remain jailed.

I doubt his opinion changed overnight, though.

His exact job description was something mild and ill-defined, a supposed spokesperson and observer for Her Majesty's Government - someone merely interested in assuring Her interests were maintained. His foppish, bloviating manner gave some weight to that role, but Kate could see it merely masked the keen, calculating mind hidden inside.

She knew the man was far more important - he was far too entrenched in every facet of British Intelligence to be anything as unassuming as he insisted.

John tore her from her ruminations.

"Look Kate," he sighed, scratching the whiskers on chin tiredly. "Could you look into it?"

Kate didn't want her nervous, suspicious instincts being validated, but

she couldn't ignore it if she tried.

She blinked, coming slowly back to reality. "Sniffing around MI6 would be risky, but not impossible," she said cautiously. "I'll see what I can find."

+

By the time the plane was nearing its approach to southern France, Soap had a new awareness of the fragility and tempestuousness of their shared soul - how it shuddered and roiled like a wild force of nature.

It raged at the separation, as though it knew of his treachery, of his intention to split them apart in death after only having just fused their souls together.

Hunched over the plane's bathroom sink, he tore at his hair, eyes swirling black as he fought against the murderous rage overcoming his senses.

After pleading and screaming at himself inwardly, he finally reached an impasse.

With himself.

Soap decided that of all of the demands and promises made in the last twenty-four hours, his last vow to Simon would be the only one he cared to uphold.

I'll marry you, and we'll live in the sun, he repeated to himself like a mantra, and as his intent changed, his black eyes slowly swirled black to their regular blue hue in the mirror.

I'm off my fucking head without you, Simon. He scrubbed at his face roughly. *Is this how it was for you before we met?*

To stop himself from separating Theo from his own spine as his savage little heart demanded, Soap had to convince himself to find another way - to not die as Miles demanded, and to somehow return himself to Simon.

He'd been sent into a spiral of panic at the prospect of Miles and his cronies killing Simon, his heightened terror blinding him of all reason. With the fear scrubbed from his brain, only a steady calm remained, the rage temporarily subdued as he planned.

Because he knew Simon wouldn't allow himself to be so easily destroyed and taken from him - not if he was warned, and not with Kate and the 141 on his side.

Soap had no reason to trust that Miles would even keep his word, and leaving Simon in the dark could prove disastrous, even if Soap executed their plan to perfection.

His own plan wasn't foolproof, but it was all he had.

I'll try coming back to you, mo ghràdh.

+

As far as final resting places went, the French countryside made for a stunning potential gravesite.

When they'd landed, Theo had quickly ushered Soap into another vehicle, and had set off deep into an isolated region of the land.

It wasn't long before he found himself in a small, yellowed villa several clicks from the target's location, and although the outside was quaint, the interior housed an impressive cache of munitions, and a tiny surveillance post to monitor Elijah Grafton's movements.

Soap had been allowed free access to the minimal grounds, in a move that had surprised him at first, but the total isolation of the area, alongside the threat over his head, was more than enough to keep him in place.

He sat in the sunkissed kitchen, and Theo ignored his sullen look as he fanned a pile of manilla folders across the table.

The files were far larger than those he'd seen in that shithole theatre, and Soap's curiosity won out. Thumbing through the pages, he noted the multitude of players in that region alone with icy dread.

His target was a leader of the French branch of the terrorist group, one Elijah Grafton, an ex-MI6 agent who'd been presumed dead for many years after he went dark on a mission in Urzikstan. His friends and family had grieved him, burying an empty casket in his honour, but British Intelligence in recent years had discovered him alive and well, high on the Al-Qatala pecking order.

As he rifled through, he felt his expression morph into one of total disbelief. Soap knew that Al-Qatala would have some presence in

Europe, but their reach was far wider than he'd anticipated.

How can there be so many in France alone?

"There might be a few key players in their midst," Theo said, shuffling a few photos back into the folder. Soap spotted a young, dark-haired woman peering up at him from the file, and pointed to it in question.

Aline Grafton née Faucher, his target's wife, and another key player in the European side of Al-Qatala, if Theodore was to be believed. He tucked that information away for later.

"But you only want Elijah?" Soap asked slowly.

"The others didn't defect from MI6," Theodore said with a dismissive shrug. "I imagine one of them will eagerly fill the void his death will leave."

His words sent a chill down his spine.

They're just sending me in to enact Miles' revenge, not to make a real difference against Al-Qatala.

Not that Soap could do that alone anyway, but it was staggering, the lengths Miles had gone just to put them both down.

Swallowing, he moved to the other stack, and he blinked at the impressive edifice etched onto the page.

The target's location was not the hidden bolt hole he was expecting.

Grafton had made himself at home in a boxy, pale castle, with steeped grey roofs and rounded turrets fortifying each corner. Its stonework suggested age, but the finely coiffed hedges showed it was still kept in good order.

"It's an old chateau." Theo tapped the image lightly. "These places are so old, so we can't verify the historical floor plans, but we have satellite images of the building and a detached conservatory on the grounds."

Soap shook his head. "How do they have a bloody castle - they're not even trying to hide."

"There's a castle for every thousand people in this country," Theo drawled dismissively. "Wealthy foreigners living it up in the French countryside don't really attract much attention."

The surrounding area was flat, picturesque countryside, with barely a tree or manmade structure in sight. And very few places to hide.

Nowhere to run, Soap realised grimly.

He'd expected as much, but being right wasn't at all gratifying.

+

"Grafton's having a recruitment drive," Theo explained mildly, as Soap stared widely at the bespoke suit laid across the table. He'd walked into the gloomy, dank armoury expecting a tactical vest, not the latest in men's fashion.

He stared blankly at Theo.

"You're not getting in if you're kitted out for war," he said boredly. "There'll be hundreds of people there tonight - mostly Al-Qatala, some hopeful converts, and a few supposedly neutral parties."

Soap noticed the silenced gun and knives on the table. There wasn't a rifle or grenade in sight.

"When do I start," he asked quietly, the dread in his heart an answer in of itself.

Not tonight, not tonight, he begged.

"Tonight," Theo answered, and Soap forced himself not to outwardly react.

No time to sleep and warn Simon, he realised with horror, the walls closing in as he was faced with even more setbacks.

Miles' change of mind, and their quick release from prison all made sense now.

This was the only way to kill Grafton and I both at once.

There'd be little chance of Soap warning Simon, not with Theo monitoring his every move, and not when there was no time for him to dream.

As he changed into the surprisingly well fitted garment, that familiar murderous rage threatened to devour him, and he struggled to talk himself down as he fumbled with the buttons on his shirt.

I'll find another way, Soap promised himself, faintly trembling as he slung his midnight blue suit jacket across his body.

When he was changed, he pocketed his minimal weapons with little fanfare. There were no gloves on offer, and he only hoped his soulmark wouldn't draw any unwanted attention.

I'm not a bloody spy, he thought wearily, as he fiddled with the cuffs of his shirt.

+

Theodore drove them most of the way, before he came to an abrupt stop on the side of the road. He didn't bother threatening Soap as they exited the vehicles without incident.

Soap followed the thick, wooded sprawl that lined the roadside, until the space suddenly opened up into the flat, lush grounds of the Al-Qatala château. Far across the mowed field, he spotted the impressive castle, alongside a glass conservatory, a golden beacon of light in the distance.

Dipping below the small valley in the ground, they easily found the decaying bridge, the stonework nearly completely engulfed by nature. A misshapen, ancient doorway was burrowed into the stone, its door long since lost to time.

Despite dressing for the occasion, the two would not be entering as guests, given they held no invitation and couldn't risk being searched for weapons.

There were disused escape tunnels beneath the chateau, a holdout from a time when its owners feared Viking raids. The two would slip into the party unnoticed, and then Soap was to execute the plan.

+

Soap stumbled out of the hand-carved, limestone tunnels into a secluded basement, and it had been a simple matter to jog up the winding staircase into a hall off the main, opulent vestibule.

Theo quickly wandered out of sight, but Soap knew he wouldn't venture far.

Soap confidently grabbed a flute of bubbles off a harried usher, put on his mildest of smiles, and ventured out into the garden.

Taking a subtle breath, he willed his heart to slow. There were hundreds of people darted throughout the bottom floor and garden, and it would've been a marvel to behold, if not for the distant guards carrying AK-47's on the fringes.

He knew what was expected of him, and what Theo was shadowing him for.

He was to lure Elijah Grafton away from the party and kill him away from prying eyes.

Soap was not expected to leave alive, although they didn't explain why, but he could hazard a good guess - it was likely Theo would sound the alarm and Soap would be caught and killed during the act.

If it had been any night but tonight, it would've been impossible to get to Grafton quietly, not without a full team of operatives on the ground. This party provided a unique opportunity, one Soap likely would have survived, if Theo wasn't specifically present to ensure Soap couldn't escape.

Al-Qatala would assume he was MI6 or French Intelligence coming to quietly eliminate Grafton if he followed the plan, and likely kill him without thought.

Miles had deemed it to be too hard to play off Soap's death as an accident if he killed Grafton out in the open, and Soap wouldn't have done such a thing if he was on an intelligence gathering mission as promised.

Which was why Soap decided he would do exactly what Miles *didn't want*, namely killing Grafton in plain sight of his guests. A stranger killing him out in the open would be so out of character for any of those groups, that Soap was certain they'd want answers from him before they killed him.

I hope.

It was the only chance he had, and with one last swig of his drink, he entered the fray.

+

The dome-shaped, glass conservatory was a stunning structure, the interior free of all plants, and instead filled with soft music and light, a gaggle of politely dressed, drunk terrorists mingling amongst each

other on the inside.

Circular bulbs of light lined the ceiling, and a funnel-like exhaust hung over the round firepit in the centre, the flame casting sensual shadows over the hazy space.

Soap smiled politely as he navigated through the crowd, surreptitiously looking for his target's blond head, when a dark-haired woman skillfully stopped him in his tracks. He recognised her immediately from one of the many photos in his file.

Aline Grafton née Faucher, his target's wife, and another major player in the European side of Al-Qatala, if his briefing was to be believed.

She gave a welcoming smile, her lids twinkling with glitter in the dim light. The words out of her mouth were a lilting French, and Soap gave an apologetic shrug.

Unperturbed, Aline switched to English, her voice lightly accented as she spoke, "I was merely saying how I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you yet." She sipped her dark wine. "I've been a poor host - there are so many that have yet to meet my husband."

Soap had not been made as he'd feared, but had been dealt an astonished easy hand. Teetering on her wicked looking heels, she beckoned him to follow, laughing breezily at something he said.

She became distracted with several groups on the way around the room, and soon she had a small entourage of newcomers on her wings, following her around like gormless ducklings.

He did not regret following her, not when she led them straight to her light-haired husband.

Elijah Grafton, he thought with a final sip of his drink. He left his glass on an empty ledge and caught up with the group, his vision narrowing as his marked hand twitched in anticipation.

Despite his peril, his heart was steadier than it had ever been. That strange, shuddering rage lurked beneath the surface, mixed with the sour tang of fear.

I'm not afraid for myself, he thought quietly. *This is for him.*

He could only hope that he'd have the chance to warn Simon after he disobeyed Miles' directive so soundly.

Before Elijah could turn to his wife's new motley crew of nefarious individuals, it was a simple matter to grasp his concealed weapon, pull it from his waistband and fire two muffled rounds into his brain stem.

This would be harder if I was trying to get away, he thought absently, as Grafton went down, and Aline screamed, guttural and haunting through the cavernous, glass dome.

He thought of Simon's hopeful, tearstained face, as pain bloomed bright on his temple, and he followed his victim down to the floor.

+

Ghost had felt light in the wake of Johnny's departure.

Riding the high of his accepted marriage proposal, with the promise of his return in only a matter of weeks, there'd been little to dull his quiet joy.

That was, until the day turned to night.

When he turned in for bed, he hadn't expected to find himself in a shared dream. Or the grandiose castle.

He knew from the strange fog that bordered the edge of the grounds that it was one of those strange dreams, but the location was not one he'd ever encountered before.

Why here, he wondered, looking at the pale fortress in bemusement.

It took a moment for the connection to form. *Johnny's in France*, he recalled, examining the fine gardens with a frown. *What intel work would have him here?*

Uneasy but eager to see him, he let himself into the castle, its doors wide open in welcome, and paused in the antechamber. The white tile lined with a pattern of black diamonds chequered neatly across the surface, the intricate moulding on the pale blue walls, spoke of a wealth that Ghost himself could hardly fathom.

He mindlessly ventured further, until he found himself in the back garden.

The white steps led down from the castle, to flat plains of emerald grass. A rounded glass conservatory stood alone from the building,

and Ghost found himself drifting down the steps, lured by the gentle music permeating the night air.

Inside was a cacophony of finely dressed people, and Ghost froze instinctively, eyes darting about to assess the crowd. His eyes slid off their faces, the details impossible to make out no matter how hard he tried to focus.

A fire pit anchored the room, and the man standing before it, backlit by mellow flames drew all of his attention.

Johnny.

Ghost strode towards him, shouldering past drunken apparitions, their bodies formless as he narrowed in on his soulmate.

After only ever seeing him in prison garb and casual clothes, Johnny was a delightful feast for the eyes. Dressed in a midnight blue suit, a light coloured button up peaked out beneath it, and the overall fit on his body was so distracting, Ghost almost missed the look on his face.

His face in profile looked oddly sorrowful, eyes closed in deep resignation, seemingly unaware of anyone else in the room.

Ghost's unease was superseded by the simple joy of finally seeing him after his short absence.

"Johnny," he called, and the other man snapped to him, eyes alight with surprise.

Ghost froze, staggering to an abrupt stop. *Did you even want to see me,* he thought with an ache. *Was this an accident?*

He expected a reply in his own mind, some sense of emotion to shed light on his condition, but there was nothing but his own thoughts.

Still blocked. He was quietly wounded by the realisation.

Bottling his hurt, he stepped persistently closer, and Johnny retreated until his calves brushed the stone of the raised fire pit. Trapped, his face seemed to transform from fear to acceptance, before a small, fragile smile crept over his mouth.

Johnny opened and closed his mouth, seemingly at a loss for words.

They'd only been apart for several hours, separated by the English Channel, and yet the space between them now felt greater than all of

that physical distance.

He was drilling a scrutinising hole in Johnny's face, lost in his own inner musings, when the man stepped forward and engulfed him in a tight embrace. Blinking, Ghost wrapped his arms around him in turn, shaken by his shifting emotions.

"Alright, Johnny?" He whispered, and he tightened his grip when the man trembled imperceptibly in response.

Johnny shifted back slightly in his hold, smiling weakly up at him, and the tears pooling in his eyes stirred his concern. "Just happy to see you," he whispered, and Ghost frowned.

"What are you up to?" Ghost asked, and the man's face froze, a tear tracking down his stiff expression. "Some intel gathering this is," he trailed off, uncertain.

He didn't expect him to be dressed to the nines in a French chateau, at least. The opulent display of wealth and merriment didn't pose as clear a risk as an active battlefield would, but Ghost wasn't naive enough to think it couldn't be just as deadly.

Johnny looked around, before he curled his arms around Ghost's neck with a tiny, wry smile.

He watched the expression form with lidded eyes, momentarily distracted from his line of questioning.

"I'll tell you in a bit," Johnny said, nudging Ghost backwards towards the swaying bodies around them. "Care to dance?"

Ghost scowled at his beaming smile. "I don't dance," he said sternly, even as he slid his hands down his back, crowding closer as Johnny drew him into a tentative sway.

"Me either," he admitted with a shrug. "But it's nice."

It was.

The intimacy of being pressed so close to him, orbiting each other to a slow, dark rhythm as flames cast sensual shadows across Johnny's face, was yet another new dizzying experience his impish soulmate had foisted upon him.

The sight of Johnny, dressed to kill and dancing so close to him

brought to mind tantalising images of their own potential wedding dance, and he nosed at his hair, secretly pleased.

The smell of iron gave him pause, and he looked down at Johnny's relaxed, content face. "Hm?" Johnny hummed, blinking sluggishly up at him in soft confusion.

A trickle of crimson lined Johnny's temples, and Ghost halted their dance, pressing his fingers to the wound. His fingers came away wet with blood, and he cupped the other side of his face frantically.

"Johnny," he said urgently, and the man tilted his head at him in question. "Why are you bleeding?"

His heart thudded wet and loud in his chest, and he crowded closer to Johnny, looking around the faceless figures around them with aggrieved suspicion.

Johnny's initial odd aloofness, his bloody injury, all paired with his sudden sweet overtures painted a terrible picture in his mind.

The resignation that crumpled his features stung his heart.

Frustrated and worried, Ghost snapped, "Let me in now - if you need help, just say so."

To hell with the deal, Ghost wasn't letting some stuffy bureaucrat separate them if he needed him.

"No time," Soap whispered, looking around urgently before he snatched Ghost's hand in his own. Eyes strained with exhaustion, he pleaded, "Laswell...Elijah Grafton - I need...."

What, Ghost agonised as his words cut out, the sound fading as the dream crumbled around them.

He touched a fingertip to his wound again, voice shaking as he growled, "Where are you?"

But the man shook his head slowly, eyes turning away as hairline cracks formed in the glass around them. "Too late..." he slurred, and the deadened, defeated tone was so incongruous with his formerly dismissive assurances, Ghost jolted in alarm.

Ghost knew a mask when he saw it, and Johnny's facade was breaking apart before his eyes.

Hand pressed to his cheek, he begged Johnny's dazed expression, his own voice coming out slow and sluggish as the fire pit abruptly roared to life.

Embers flecked his vision, and he watched with horror as Johnny quietly turned to ash in his hands, slipping from his fingers with a burst of hot air.

Ghost's face was mashed into his pillow when his eyes snapped awake, and he tore himself out of his bunk in a flurry of fury and anguish.

+

Stupid daft prick, Theo seethed, as Aline screamed at the guards in rapid French, spittle flying as she pointed at the bodies of Grafton and MacTavish at her feet.

Only the latter was still alive.

Should've known he wouldn't behave.

He was cleverer than he looked, Theo would give him that. With Al-Qatala on high alert, Theo would have little opportunity to warn Miles of Soap's disobedience, as the chateau would be locked down indefinitely as they struggled to figure out exactly what had gone wrong.

After a moment of consideration, Theo decided it likely wouldn't change much after all.

Soap would still die, albeit slower than planned. The 141 would unfortunately hear of the event now, but it would be easy enough to blame Soap's instability for his supposed intel mission spiralling out of control.

Miles' true intentions were strictly off the books, and only himself and Theo knew of the assassination plan.

And Soap, he thought darkly, watching his limp body being roughly dragged to the chateau.

But with him dead, no one would ever be the wiser.

+

Ghost had practically beat down John's door when Kate had been convening with him in the quiet hours of the night. He stormed inside,

ranting and raving about a dream, certain that Soap was not on a low stakes mission after all.

She'd never seen him so animated and distressed, his exposed face revealing every crack of fear and agitation. She wondered if he was always like this beneath the mask, or if Soap's peril was the only cause.

Probably both.

The name Elijah Grafton sent alarm bells ringing in her mind, however.

She quickly left John to deal with his wild subordinate and set to work.

Rather than risk discovery by searching directly into Miles, she quietly spoke to her counterparts in French Intelligence, under the guise of comparing notes on active terrorist threats across the region.

Which she often did, but it had merely been a means to an end to sniff out further information - she didn't expect Soap to have any dealings with Al-Qatala.

She'd been very wrong.

The French had been aware of the growing presence of the terrorist group on their soil, and had been actively investigating key targets for months.

"The *Brits* have made a mess of things, though." The sneer in her contacts' voice was palpable over the line, his French accent dripping with derision. "We had a delicate operation and now our work has been set back..."

She listened with growing alarm, her fingers white knuckling her phone as he spoke.

They had sent an agent into a recruitment drive slash genteel soiree, where they suspected British ex-pat and traitor Elijah Grafton resided as an important figure in Al-Qatala.

Their agent had witnessed an unidentified *Englishman* shoot Grafton multiple times before being subdued and disappeared from the crowd. The party had subsequently ended with all guests put on lockdown, the target unceremoniously eliminated, with no word from the UK as

to why.

She asked for a description of the man, and felt all her fears come to pass.

“Scottish,” Kate corrected in a whisper.

“Hm?”

She blinked, and quickly encouraged him to continue.

“I know that *dog* Miles was involved,” he continued, undeterred. “He’s been bleating about wanting us to move on his little traitor, but we couldn’t jeopardise everything for petty revenge.”

As she listened with one ear, she rapidly searched up Grafton, blanching at the web of betrayal and lies she found.

Ex-MI6, presumed dead publicly, but in reality alive and well as a key player in the European branch of Al-Qatala.

Not alive anymore, she thought tersely.

“His wife, Aline Faucher, will be quick to take his spot,” he said wearily. “Grafton was intent to legitimise their cause, but she has no such ambitions.”

Kate’s hand paused on her laptop. “Meaning?”

“She is infinitely more savage than her husband,” he said bluntly, and the implications chilled her to the core.

“Do you know what happened to the assassin?” She asked quickly.

The man scoffed. “Assassin - pah, he was not even trying to hide.” She closed her eyes, pained.

What on Earth was Soap doing?

“I cannot say for certain, but he was alive when our agent escaped the premises.”

She suspected Ghost would sense if he’d perished in the interim, but it was a small comfort.

They had all had enough dealings with that group to know that he wouldn’t live long without intervention.

Kate had been right to distrust Miles' intentions, but she could never have predicted just how out of control things could've gotten in less than twenty-four hours.

She smothered her fury at being outplayed by Miles so easily, and set off to see John.

+

The moment Kate was off the phone with her French counterparts, she stormed into John's office without knocking. He looked up expectantly, and Simon spun on his heel from where he paced near his desk.

She eyed the black smothering Simon's eyes warily as she reported her findings to John.

"They were never sending him on an intelligence gathering mission," Simon concluded in a tight hiss, fists clenched tight to his sides.

John grimaced. "It seems that way."

"Miles never wanted him free," Kate agreed, closing the lid of her laptop softly.

It was only supposition, but there was no reasonable explanation as to why Soap killed such a major Al-Qatala target, unless he'd been briefed to do so. And Miles would've known that such a move would've guaranteed his death.

There was a hollow pause as their minds collectively turned to their parting with Soap only hours before.

"Did Soap know?" John wondered tiredly, and Simon bristled.

Simon's teeth were clenched when he bit out, "He wouldn't have... he wouldn't." He trailed off, as the implications seemed to steal the air from his lungs. "He would've said something."

Kate quietly suspected Soap might've known all along, but declined to voice her opinion. There was only one possible motivator that would've kept Soap silent, and she didn't think said motivator would be able to cope with discovering the obvious truth from her.

They patched in Shepherd, and after some back and forth with the French authorities, were given approval to set off for France to extract

Soap. It was decided that it would be the 141 and a small troop of French soldiers storming the Al-Qatala chateau-

"Including me," Simon said, his voice steel as his black eyes bored John in challenge. After a long pause, John relented.

Kate questioned the wisdom of allowing Simon on the ground with anyone right now, but looking at the rage rippling across his body, she suspected John had little choice but to allow it.

She didn't want to know what he would be capable of, if he was denied the chance to save his soulmate.

+

Soap came to -

That's surprising.

He hadn't really expected to ever wake up again.

There was a fire at his back, and for a moment he thought he was still in the conservatory, before he noticed the grandiose fireplace in his periphery, and the high, intricately moulded ceilings above him.

He was in a darkened grand sitting room within the chateau, zip tied to a plush, bottle green antique armchair. There was movement in the shadows in the corners of the room, and when he squinted, he swore he could spot armed Al-Qatala watching him.

Two grand doors burst open, and Aline Grafton stormed in, her bloodied feet leaving macabre crimson footprints across the golden floorboards.

Her husband's blood, Soap realised.

She didn't hesitate to cross the pale Aubuson rug towards him, soiling the material irreparably as she raised her hand. When she slapped him hard across the face, his head snapped to the side as pain bloomed across his cheek.

Given he'd just killed her husband, he likely deserved that, although he held no regrets killing anyone from their wretched group.

She'd changed into practical trousers and a button up since Soap had last seen her, although her glittering eyelids remained. Her eyes were completely dry, but he suspected from haunted screams earlier, her

concealed grief was very real all the same.

+

Ghost sat alone and away from Price and Gaz on the transport aircraft, glove pulled up to his fingertips as he stared intently at his soulmark.

Despite his extended stint in prison, Ghost had been geared up and ready in record time, all of the motions coming back to him without conscious thought. He'd sat waiting on the transport long before the others were ready, gazing at his right hand with furious terror cracking his mind right apart.

The bright silvery lines of their shared soul twinkled cheerily up at him, and he held onto the evidence of Johnny's continued existence like a lifeline, fearing that if he looked away, it would darken and decay without him noticing.

As if he'd ever be able to ignore the loss of Johnny from his life. He knew it would destroy the last vestiges of sanity from his soul if Johnny died - like he was sure he would, if they didn't make it in time.

Tracing the silvery line, he let out a shuddering breath.

Ghost didn't want to consider why Johnny was in danger now, when he'd been safe in his arms only a day prior.

The likely answer lingered insistently in the back corners of his mind, a guilty spectre haunting his thoughts, but he didn't want to acknowledge the truth.

That this was his fault, all of it, and if he'd never agitated for their release as Johnny had warned against, he wouldn't be in grave danger as he was now.

Ghost had been blind to everything, so caught up in his victory that he hadn't realised anything was amiss.

Pathetically, he couldn't help but wonder if Johnny had ever intended to make good on his promise to marry him.

He must not have known, he told himself, but it rang hollow in his mind.

Whatever reasons Johnny had for concealing this from him, for lying

to him on that tarmac, Ghost would forgive him for all of it - if he'd only keep living.

+

The fire cast sinister shadows over Aline's face as she waved a man over, her hand outstretched as he wordlessly placed a set of pliers on her palm. Her cold, dead eyes remained locked on Soap through it all, and he eyed the implement nervously.

Aline looked wild and dangerous as she approached, her lips twisted as she once again asked:

Who are you?

Who do you work for?

Who sent you?

Soap summoned that fractured, insidious rage like armour, not to protect himself, but for Simon.

He knew if he broke, if the mystery of his presence was revealed, they'd quickly kill him. The longer he could stay quiet, the better the chance of rescue was.

If the 141 are even coming at all.

He had to believe that Kate could figure this out - if Miles knew where Grafton was, surely she would, too.

Soap thought of that strange instinct that had guided him to prison, that innate sense of knowing Simon was trapped and in peril, and wondered if he would feel it now, too.

"You will tell me," Aline declared breezily, snapping her fingers at another guard.

Soap snarled at her, his insidious rage snapping a fierce denial.

He wouldn't break, because then he'd die, and that would break his vow to Simon -

Soap's wrists, tied to the arms of his chair were enveloped in the man's bruising grip, the fingers of his right hand forcibly unfurled.

When Aline forced his index finger between the tips of her pliers, she

raised her brows at him in silent question.

Soap blinked his blackened, flat eyes at her and smiled in invitation.

When the jaws of the pliers snapped downward, Soap threw his head back, his agonised howls torn ragged from the depths of his throat.

With his first finger broken, he panted harshly, staring at the golden shadows dancing along the walls as sweat beaded at his temples. He felt metal envelop his pointer finger, Aline's voice continuing to snap harsh inquiries at him.

Hurry, Simon, please.

+

On the plane, Ghost jolted awake.

He'd fallen asleep staring at his mark, but the sound of Johnny screaming echoing in his mind tore him from his restless slumber.

Ghost was sure he'd heard him, loud and piercing in his head, but he was certain their bond was still blocked.

He checked his marked hand in a panic, but sank bonelessly into his seat at the solid, silver line.

Worried and bemused, he caressed the mark soothingly.

I'm coming, Johnny.

+

Soap threw himself back in his seat, fruitlessly trying to bend and shrink away from the pliers cracking his bones despite the ties binding him. The heat at his back had intensified, and he knew the chair had scraped back with every excruciating snap of his fingers.

His binds hand loosened slightly, but not enough to escape, least of all with the man Soap had miserably named Fingers holding his wrists down.

Think that's five fingers now, he thought woozily, blinking at his mangled right hand. Or is it four, plus a thumb?

Soap trembled faintly as his left hand was unfurled, and she paused at the soft light emanating from his palms, the evidence of their

complete, silver soul dancing on his skin.

“You are marked,” she observed dully.

Aline turned as several men burst in, voices raised in urgency and she hissed something back, sending them back on their way.

Head limp on his shoulders, Soap relished in the brief respite, staring longingly at his soulmark, tears of pain burning down his cheeks as he grappled with his inevitable fate.

When another man sauntered in with several bottles of spirits, Soap dopily perked up, wondering if they’d decided to get him sauced to lower his inhibitions instead.

Much more effective method than this.

The pungent smell of Vodka filled the air, and Soap flinched as alcohol was poured over his body.

“If you continue your squirming, you will fall into the fire,” Aline said, pointedly snapping the pliers between her fingers. “You can answer my simple questions, or burn to death.”

He twisted his head around, eyeing his proximity to the fireplace with sheer terror, before slowly turning around.

I don’t want to die.

Soap was scared even now to unblock their connection, wondering if it would even work without Simon nearby.

Worse still, he feared what he’d do if he unblocked it and discovered Simon wasn’t coming after all. Soap would selfishly expose his impending death to Simon, and he’d be helpless to stop it.

Would it be so bad, he wondered, tears blurring his vision. Just to see him again?

His armour of rage was cracking under the weight of his terror, and his overwhelming desire to slip away on a dream was sinking his resolve into nothing.

+

Ghost followed Price and Gaz into an armoured truck, body on edge as he listened to the Captain bark down a radio with his French

counterpart.

It wouldn't be long until they approached the Al-Qatala chateau, and despite their proximity, Ghost still couldn't feel Johnny.

If he was in pain, surely he wouldn't be able to block me still, he consoled himself.

His hopes that Johnny was unharmed were dashed when several clicks away from the target site, Ghost began to slump ominously in his seat, body falling limp in his harness as they trundled through dark countryside.

"Jesus, Ghost?" Gaz cried, but it was too late, he was already falling into darkness.

+

There were hypnotic, gold shadows framing Johnny from where he sat alone in an antique chair. His suit jacket was long gone, the top button of his shirt parted enticingly as he tugged futilely on the soft ties tethering him to the chair.

A dream, Ghost thought hopefully.

"Johnny," Ghost whispered urgently, kneeling before his soulmate with his hands resting on his limp knees.

When Johnny's dazed pupils contracted, locking keenly on him, Ghost smiled tremulously. "Hello, love," he said quietly, startling at the immediate sob that spilled from Johnny's lips.

"Simon." The pure unadulterated relief soaking his words hit him like a stone, and Ghost blinked harshly at the palpable emotion. Johnny eyed his mask and tactical gear in dazed wonder. "You're coming."

Ghost's hands tensed on Johnny's knees in astonishment.

"You think I wouldn't come for you?" He asked darkly, jaw working as he gazed at Johnny in wounded disbelief.

Johnny shook his head rapidly, eyes wide. "No, I mean, aye, yes-," he said, voice strangled and tight. "I just, I thought I hadn't told you enough to find me."

Ghost interrupted, eyes roving over him for injuries, "Where are you now, inside the chateau?"

He shrugged weakly. "I'm sorry," he mumbled, lids drooping as he fought to stay alert. "Room looks like this but, I didn't see where they took me..."

"Shh, it's alright." Ghost stroked his wet cheek, his other hand trailing down his arm soothingly. "Unblock me now, Johnny," he requested gently, stroking over his exposed soulmark.

Johnny moaned in agony, and Ghost froze, feeling the artificial barrier break away as his control on the block disintegrated.

The soft scene shattered, and Ghost rose in a slow turn.

The emotions and thoughts Johnny tried to hide rushed forth, and his tortured miasma of pain swept their bond, leaving Ghost breathless as he took in the scene.

The room was the same, but he knew from the armed occupants that this was his reality.

There was a woman - Grafton's wife, Aline - and another towering, muscled man forcing Johnny's hands open, and she was encasing his finger in pliers. She frowned at his unconscious face, patting at his slack cheek as she groused at him.

Ghost took in the swelling, purpling flesh of his other hand where it lay broken and mangled in zip ties, looked at his soaking form, the empty bottles of spirits on the floor and his proximity to the flame, and felt his mind go suspiciously blank.

"S'mon?" Johnny whimpered, and the vision of his sleeping form faded as his dazed, dreaming one took its place.

Ghost wordlessly stared at his soulmate, so brave and stubborn it tore his mind asunder, his own fury a cold, still lake in his mind as the image of Johnny's ongoing torture was etched permanently in his psyche.

He would never be able to scrub it from his mind, all of his failure laid bare in haunting detail, a perpetual bloody wound that would never coagulate and heal, etched deep within his heart.

He'd begged and pleaded to be able to meet his soulmate all of his life, promising he'd be good to him, that **he'd take care of him** -

'M sorry, Johnny's small voice whispered into his mind. Never wanted

you to see this.

Johnny's eyes spilled over as Ghost pressed his mask to his forehead, stroking his hair as he struggled to get a hold of his own quiet anger. Even now, all he was doing was hurting Johnny when he needed him the most.

He knew it wasn't the time, that his fearful suspicions were worthless in the face of Johnny's perils, and yet the question spilled from his mouth anyway.

"You were saying goodbye for good on that tarmac, weren't you, love?" Ghost asked softly, his hollow eyes watching Johnny tremble as the truth tore itself out of his mind.

Yes. The admission was a harrowing croak, and Ghost snapped back into reality as the transport shuddered violently over a pothole.

Ghost ignored Gaz's worried questioning as he stared sightlessly at his boots, fists curling tight on his knees as his feeble, awful yes echoed torturously in his mind.

I've failed you, Johnny, he acknowledged quietly, a wintry fury coiling his heart. *For the last time.*

+

At some point, Theo was dragged into the room, eyes baleful on Soap as his captors conversed with Aline in French.

"He was trying to leave." She asked shrewdly, "Another one of yours?"

With his mind dull with pain, he was soundly confused at how they'd been linked, until he recalled the Scottish heritage he shared with Theo. *Serves you right, you jammy prick.*

"Aye, his face rings a bell," he said sluggishly, smirking weakly when Theo raged at him from ducktaped lips. It was the most he'd seen the man emote thus far, and it was a pleasant diversion from the pliers snapping his phalanges like twigs.

And the fire that loomed close with every agonised twist of his body, and every animalistic yowl of pain.

Theo was thrown to the floor near his side, his arms twisted behind

him in zip ties. Soap eyed the dark red blooming on his white shirt, a knife embedded deep in his gut as he struggled to breathe.

Aline sent Soap a darkly unimpressed look. "Since you have been so uncooperative." She gestured a manicured talon to Theo. "We will see what we can get out of 'im, before he bleeds out."

Soap froze with instant regret.

I shouldn't have told her we know each other.

His usefulness was dwindling by the second, and he watched in abject terror as Fingers ripped the tape from Theo's mouth.

Theo worked his jaw, a knowing gleam shining in his beady eyes as he opened his mouth -

There were several loud bangs, distant pinging echoes of destruction reverberating across the chateau.

Aline spun with alarm, and several armed men poured from the room as she shouted at them.

It took a moment for his sluggish brain to recognise the sound

Gunfire, he realised.

Soap's eyes widened.

Simon.

+

Price stopped him as they piled out of the truck, eyes as piercing and hard as the hand on Ghost's shoulder.

"Simon," he began.

"Captain," Ghost bit out, willing himself to remain still. He couldn't, no, he wouldn't be denied the chance to save Johnny, whether Price wanted him in there or not.

He gave him a long, searching look. "I need you focused, Lieutenant - not everyone inside is Al-Qatala," he reminded needlessly.

"I'm aware," Ghost agreed coolly. Closing his eyes momentarily, he exhaled as frustration crept into his voice. "Whatever it takes, Price,

but I've *seen* him, and we need to move." Ghost waved his marked hand at him meaningfully. "I can find him faster than anyone else, Captain."

He was bordering on insubordination, but Price remained entirely unphased by his gruff overtures. His eyes darted to his concealed hand in understanding, before he patted his shoulder.

"Right then," Price said, nodding at Ghost and Gaz. "With me, you two. Let's move."

Finally.

+

By the time they arrived on the manicured back gardens of the chateau, the French troops had already cleared the lush lawn of enemies, scores of dead littered across the grass.

A group of non-combatants were huddled in the conservatory under guard from a few soldiers, and Ghost tore his eyes away from the glass dome, wiping the memory of their dance from his mind.

Once inside, they began the painstaking process of clearing every room in the vast castle, and with every dead end, his dread only grew. Ghost had only seen a tiny portion of the interior in his dream, and had no idea where Johnny's opulent cage was.

Huddled behind cover, he focused on his mark, on their shared souls, and with a tiny shiver, something pulled loose in his mind.

Foreign emotions crowded his brain.

His terror and hope, all of his chaotic feelings a blissful revelation to Ghost's lonely mind.

Johnny.

His voice, weak and beautiful, instantly murmured back.

Simon.

+

Soap had little time to celebrate his mental reunion, when Theo's haggard voice drifted through the air.

“The 141,” he offered slowly, and Aline turned towards him, her eyes wild and vibrating in her skull. “They’re-”

“I know who they are,” she said shortly. “They’re here for you?”

No.

Soap shouted a denial, but Theo nodded, and he watched the motion of his head for the death sentence it was.

He watched the cogs turn in Aline’s mind, as she took in all of the evidence - their Scottish origin, their target and weaponry, the 141’s history with Al-Qatala - and deemed Theo’s answer to be true.

Aline said something to Fingers, and the brute of a man turned to Soap, his meaty hands grasping his chair and tipping him slowly back.

The fire was far, far too close to his alcohol soaked body.

Johnny! Simon’s desperate cry pierced his mind.

“Wait,” Theo wheezed. “His soulmate is here-”

“*Haud yer wheesht,*” Soap hissed, chest heaving as that choking anger rushed to the forefront once more. “Don’t -.”

Theo ignored him. “He’s here, you should-”

Gunfire echoed, even closer than before, and Soap’s eyes snapped to the door, hope rising dangerously.

“I don’t care for your petty squabbles,” Aline snapped, snapping her hands at the few goons who remained. “Leave him - with me,” she ordered Fingers, and he set the chair back down with a resounding thud, jarring his deformed hands awfully.

Soap’s ties felt even more slack around his wrists, but not enough to snap them.

Might be able to slip through, if you pick your moment, Simon murmured.

The beautiful antique lounges were upturned, and Aline, Fingers, and several men armed to the teeth took position across the space, rifles pointed unerringly at the double doors.

Simon, he said urgently, transmitting a vision of his own view.

I see it, Simon murmured, and there was a pause as he relayed it to Price. *Thank you, love.*

Soap couldn't help but smile a little, and the traitorous bastard on the floor witnessed it with a sneer.

"He's warning them," Theo shouted, and Soap snarled at him in disbelief. Aline jerked her head back at him. "I told you, his soulmate's here, he's communicating with him."

Why is he helping Al-Qatala? Soap raged, heart hammering as Aline looked between the two men in consideration.

Simon, he warned, as Aline murmured something to Fingers, pointing at Soap.

We're nearly there, Johnny, Simon's soothing voice reassured him, but he couldn't entirely conceal the terror underpinning it, as he saw his inevitable fate clearly in their shared mind. Fingers once again rose, and Soap knew he was about to meet his end.

Soap had been so close to fulfilling his promise to Simon. He'd watched his eyes break apart in his mind when he realised what Soap had done, and he'd thought it'd be okay so long as he could live to make it up to him.

Soap's last vows rang painfully in his mind - To come back, to marry him, to protect him as much as he could even with the horrible threats looming so large over them both.

And it would all be ruined, because of the horrible little man on the floor.

Shaking with apoplectic fury, Soap slipped his shattered hands through his slack binds and launched himself out of his chair, just as the grand doors slammed open, and the adjacent windows shattered with gunfire.

He saw Gaz twist in through the window In the chaos, but Soap was too far gone to bear witness.

His ravenous soul bayed for blood, and he launched himself onto Theo on the floor with a wild cry.

The agent howled as his stab wound was jostled, and ignoring the horrific pain throbbing over his hand, Soap grasped at the knife

embedded in Theo's gut-

The knife was no longer there.

Soap gasped and rolled away just as Theo, knife in hand, slashed at Soap's legs - too weak to reach for his thigh as intended - for his femoral, Soap realised, and instead sundered the flesh deep behind his knee.

Johnny!

White, hot pain lashed his leg, and Soap keened, slumping bodily to the floor. He weakly crawled away from his assailant on his elbows, but there was nowhere safe to go, not with bullets still flying in every direction.

He tried to twist away, but even with Theo slowly bleeding out, it did not deter him as he flung himself onto Soap, knife glinting ominously above him.

How did he get free, Soap wondered softly, eyes fluttering weakly as the blade careened down towards him.

There was an enraged, thunderous growl, and Soap flinched at the bang that reverberated through above him. A soft thwip rushed by and Theo arched backwards, blood spraying Soap's face as a bullet sent him crumpling into an awkward heap.

Dead.

The knife clattered harmlessly to the floor, and Soap remained frozen on his back, blinking in soft disbelief at his continued existence.

A hushed silence fell over the room, dust trickling down to the floor as the sounds of battle ceased.

Simon? He asked tentatively.

His beautiful, awful mask loomed overhead, and Soap was too overwhelmed, too joyous to prevent the giggling sobs that bubbled up and out of his throat.

Price and Gaz approached, but he only had eyes for Simon when he leant his head up, smiling beatifically in relief at him.

Simon ripped his headset and mask off, and Soap laughed weakly as he swooped in to trail gentle kisses across his cheek, his head cradled

gently in his palms.

Unbidden, a memory flared bright in his mind.

“So,” Soap leaned his elbow against the table, cheered when the other man turned his head slightly towards him. “Come here often?”

Ghost rolled his eyes, and Soap grinned, victorious.

So there is someone in there, after all.

“So, mo ghràdh,” Soap slurred, eyes weakly roving his tremulous, adoring face. “Come here often?”

There was a fond, shaky sigh in his mind, and he luxuriated in Simon’s painfully amused recollection, before his eyes rolled back as exhaustion finally overcame him.

Soap was dead to the world before he even hit the ground.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully not nearly as painful a cliffhanger as last time!

I know some people were speculating how this would resolve based off existing canon, but I’ll be honest I use canon characters and groups and twist them to my own liking haha.

Writing COD’s gameplay and setting can be boring as hell sometimes, so it was way more fun thrusting Soap into a French terrorist party instead, like something out of Dishonored :’)

Please let me know what you guys thought - I struggled a lot writing this one, because I was way more excited to explore the aftermath than writing this mission tbh. At one point Soap was gonna be trapped in a mediaeval oubliette... so you can see how this chapter was really running away from me lmfao :x

Translations

Aye- Yes

Jammy - lucky (but worthy of it)

Off my heid - Off my head

Haud yer wheesht - Be quiet

To the Sun

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone for being patient! Hopefully it was worth the wait. <3

CW: Violence, torture and murder (mostly alluded to), brief dubious consent (presented via a fictional book, not between Soap and Ghost but also...in a meta way, kind of is).

~

Title inspired by Demon Days by Gorillaz

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

While his insidious revenge plot was carried out by Theodore and the prisoner, Miles slept soundly in his bed, content to wait for the agent to contact him once the job was done.

He was disturbed late at night, not from a call from Theodore as he expected, but from a sharp tearing pain of agony in his very being.

Ah, he thought, thoroughly vexed as he watched the blackened line on his palm peel and scab over before his eyes. The smell of decaying flesh assaulted his nostrils, and he gripped his wrist as pain threatened to send him unconscious.

Theodore is dead.

His soul had never opened in the presence of the man, though there'd always been an irritating buzzing in his head whenever Theodore was in his presence. Now it would likely never be felt again.

It was the death of his soulmate, and he felt nothing at all.

Well that wasn't entirely true. Doubtless something had gone very wrong in the hours since he'd seen them both off, and without Theodore readily available to fix the mess, he'd have to tread lightly.

Irritated, he pulled himself out of bed with a huff.

The French will be insufferable about this.

Soap's grip on reality was tenuous, a shifting blur of bright white light and the susurrus murmurs of unfamiliar voices.

He had the general sense that he was in hospital, his body pleasantly numb as his mind drifted in and out of consciousness.

The last time he'd seen Simon was on the floor of the chateau, and he was starting to worry he'd only imagined unblocking him, until he finally dreamed of him again.

~

Soap walked into the now restored old theatre that Miles had first threatened him in with no small amount of dread. He cautiously drifted into the main auditorium, the lights dim as a terrible tale unfolded for an audience of one.

Simon sat alone, watching the ghosts of Soap's past act out his memories - and his well intentioned betrayal.

Soap wordlessly crept through the rows of seats and sat by his side, a cacophony of Simon's fury shuddering through his mind as he neared.

"This is a suicide mission," his past self said, face stony with resignation.

"Correct," Miles agreed easily.

Simon's hands white knuckled the seat rests, a fine tremor of emotion rippling across his shoulders.

The memory unfolded with perfect clarity from there, and Soap wondered how such a thing was possible, with his mind so fogged over with painkillers and exhaustion.

When it finally came to an end, the golden stage lights shut off with a resounding echo, and the three ghosts of his memory evaporated with the light.

They sat in total darkness for a long moment, until a familiar silvery light illuminated their faces. Simon's upturned palm rested between them in silent offering, his mark twinkling merrily in stark contrast to his carefully blank features.

Soap tentatively slid his own marked hand across the bare skin of his

forearms, and Simon shuddered with a shaky exhale.

“Never should’ve pushed you,” he said roughly, and when Soap frowned, he barrelled on insistently. “You never wanted to leave, and I ignored it.”

Misery was quickly choking the flame of Simon’s fury, and Soap winced.

He hadn’t thought it was right to walk away after killing his father the way he had, but the guilt of the act was certainly softened when the State had deemed murdering *him* an acceptable form of penance.

Simon’s grumblings interrupted his musings, *Supposed to keep you safe, Johnny.*

Soap squeezed his arm. *You have been, and you did*, he consoled, thinking of their daring rescue with a quiet twang of relief. *I was just returning the favour.*

“You shouldn’t have had to.” Simon’s eyes shuttered darkly. “It’s my job.”

All of Simon’s mad promises to both of them, his fierce loyalty and protectiveness, rambled wildly through their minds.

Want to slay my dragons, do you, mo ghràdh? He teased, watching Simon’s face twitch tellingly. *Those books have rotted your brain.*

Aloud, Soap said, “You think I wouldn’t do anything to keep you safe too, Simon?”

“Should’ve told me, at least,” Simon muttered, bringing his other hand over to lightly trace the ridges of Soap’s knuckles.

“I couldn’t risk it, Simon,” he said fiercely. “I couldn’t think straight, with everything Miles was threatening.” His chest burned as he blinked harshly. “Thinking he’d take you from me if I cracked,” he hissed sharply.

When he realised how hard he was gripping Simon’s arm, he quickly released him.

The sight of Soap’s unstable emotions seemed to deflate Simon’s fury. He could see the gears turning in Simon’s mind, his overwhelm at seeing that same savage vein of protectiveness streaking through

Soap's heart, a perfect mirror of Simon's devotion.

You would've done the same, Soap reminded quietly. Simon's tensed jaw was answer enough.

He didn't think he deserved it, and Soap knew simply refuting him wouldn't be enough to convince him. Soap would happily spend the rest of his life convincing him he was.

A fragile thought creaked loudly through his brain.

Did you really think you were going to die? Simon's voice was a rough, tremulous whisper.

Soap wanted to look away, but he had to face the hurt he'd wrought on Simon.

Yes.

Simon exhaled raggedly, an aborted, rasping noise slipping out as he turned away.

He wasn't sure what he expected - fury, betrayal, perhaps a chasm would form between the two that could never be reconciled.

I'm such a fucking idiot, Simon groused instead, scrubbing at his face.

Soap had expected more anger than this.

Simon swivelled on him, eyes suspiciously wet. *I'm beyond fucking furious at you, Johnny.*

His overall effect was ruined by the tremulous emotion shuddering through him, as he struggled to keep himself under wraps.

Thought you were just sad to leave. He added as he wiped his eyes, *Bit pathetic, really.*

Soap knew It hurt Simon more, to think he'd missed just how much pain he'd been in.

You just don't know me well enough yet, Soap said gently. *To know something was wrong.*

Without the truth of his mind, Simon had been blind.

You will eventually, though, He added with a hopeful smile. *Whole life*

of uncomfortable honesty ahead of us now. Soap tapped his forehead wryly, desperate to lighten the tone.

“You still want to marry me?” Simon asked roughly, latching onto the discussion of their future like a man starved. His shrivelled hope flared across their bond.

Aye, of course. Soap blinked, cocking his head with a roguish grin. *It’s all out of order though. Did the dance before the rings.*

“I’ll take care of that,” Simon blurted, flushing prettily.

“That’s good, think I’m stuck here for the time being,” Soap said dryly, and Simon’s expression darkened. “Think we’ll be sent back to prison when I’m better?” He asked quietly.

“No,” Simon said, sliding a hand around his jaw and tilting his downcast eyes towards him. Dim silver glistened off Simon’s wild, stormy eyes. “As I said, I’ll take care of it.”

All of it, this time.

Simon, he warned, feeling oblivion sliding around the edges of his awareness. *Not to be a complete hypocrite*, he mumbled. *But isn’t hiding things from each other what got us into this mess?*

“Not hiding,” he murmured with a tiny smile, thumbing his temple. “Here.”

In his mind, Simon presented a vision of the all things he planned, the murder and vengeance, every inch of damage that had been inflicted onto Soap being replicated tenfold to the man that had caused it all.

After, the light at the end - he would find them the home he was so desperate to make for them.

Soap thought to protest, more scared for Simon’s sake than truly disapproving, before he pecked the tip of Simon’s nose and pulled back with a tired smile. *Just don’t get caught, daft man.*

His wet laughter echoed fondly through Soap’s mind.

‘Course not, Johnny.

Simon’s breath ghosted over his lips as he drifted softly closer, but Soap fell back into darkness before they could touch.

+ +

Ghost lingered near Johnny's hospital ward for as long as he could, until he was certain his soulmate was in safe hands.

They wouldn't let him in to see him, even with Price's assurances of Ghost's marked palm linking them through a bond stronger than marriage, but they would not be swayed.

After the shitshow at the Al-Qatala chateau, the French were distrusting of everyone, not willing to allow visitors to any of the wounded civilians without their explicit permission.

Given Johnny was undergoing surgery for the nerve damage in his leg, he wouldn't be awake for some time.

It was only the ability to see him in his dreams that kept Ghost from storming the hospital and savagely tearing anyone apart who got in his way.

If we were married already, they'd have let me in, he thought morosely, staring at his naked ring finger blankly, before a buzz at his side stole his attention.

It was Laswell, and she had exactly what he needed.

M not aware of 141 involvement yet. French refusing all comms.

Perfect, Ghost thought grimly.

Now's your best shot, before he goes to ground.

He left Price and Gaz under the guise of dealing with his calamitous emotions, and Price let him go with little fanfare. Although he was supposedly Ghost's keeper now, he seemed to have no intention of upholding that ruse after all that had occurred.

If Price knew he was planning out a murder with Laswell while he was dawdling in the ward's waiting room, he didn't say a word.

He was the soulmate killer, after all, and he had one final victim to silence.

+

Laswell gave him all the tools he needed to slip into the night and cross the sea back to the UK with barely a hitch.

When he came upon Miles' gaudy, palatial manor though, Ghost was on his own. The things he planned could not be authorised through any official capacity, but she would do what she could to direct the blame away from him.

Miles was a thorn in the side of many powerful people, and it would take a lifetime of sorting through potential suspects before suspicion would ever fall on Ghost.

After all, according to Laswell their sordid little release deal was nowhere to be found in official channels. Miles had covered his own tracks so well, there'd be nothing to link him to his true murderer.

His death would be nothing quick and impersonal as Ghost's first victims had been, in any case.

Despite the man's paranoid nature, he trusted none more than technology to guard his home and person, his staff dismissed like clockwork at the same time every night.

That was one of his final mistakes.

His first one was ever coming between himself, and the man he'd waited all his life for.

+

Soap dreamed.

The clarity he'd enjoyed earlier was gone, the anaesthetic clouding his mind as he swirled to being in an unfamiliar, opulent study.

In the gloom he saw rare curios neatly dotted across massive floor to ceiling bookshelves, filled to the brim with thick, pristine tomes. There were no photos or personal effects beyond a few gold foiled certificates framed on the walls.

On the glossy wooden floor there was something that looked like a man screaming himself hoarse, writhing in his own blood and excrement as his lovely soulmate loomed above him and broke his body into nothing.

Oh.

He absently wondered if this was happening in real time, or the remnants of a recent event.

Simon's masked head jerked up in his direction, eyes finding him unerringly in the dark. The whites of his eyes were huge, something like fear lurking under the surface as his gloved hands clenched around his pliers and knife.

Soap merely smiled a little dopily, and Simon's shoulders sank in relief.

He really should've been more disturbed to see that familiar, chalky mask splattered with blood, to see that gasping creature squirming in terror at his feet - but he only felt sick with adoration.

He suspected it was Miles he had at his mercy, and he knew killing this man was a safeguard for their future, and although unnecessary brutal, Soap was more stunned at having someone who cared enough to avenge him.

Soap watched it all unfold from the sidelines, not taking his eyes off Simon even as Miles screamed, ragged and haunting on the floor. He didn't look away until the job was done.

When Miles was finally dead, Soap looked at the mangled remains of his body, and his eyes welled in astonishment.

He was marked?

Every inch of the man had been destroyed beyond recognition, save for his palm, where his decayed, neglected soulmark remained untouched.

Simon wouldn't damage a soulmark, not after what had been done to Soap's own.

Simon, he whispered tremulously through their bond.

He curled his own mark tight to his chest, gazing at Simon with a cavernous longing in his heart.

Through the black of his mask, Simon's eyes creased at him, a warm lifeline in the miserable dark.

+

It was only a little over a week into Soap's recovery when he finally saw Simon and the team in the flesh again. He'd spoken to Simon sporadically as he slept, but it was a heady thing to see him in person,

both of them so wholly changed in only a matter of weeks.

It had been a tense, quiet reunion, having them all in his tiny hospital room, until Price finally spoke.

Price's quiet disappointment at his silence on the tarmac, mingled with fierce pride at his characteristic bullish bravery cut the tension like a knife.

"Don't do that again," Price said gruffly, arms crossed tight across his chest.

Gaz nodded in solemn agreement, and the two both gave him eerie, twin looks of reproach.

"Sorry , " Soap rasped, sending Price a dopey smile. The other man merely sighed, patting his uninjured leg fondly.

"Ballsy move, Soap, killing him in the open like that" Gaz said, all admiration. "How'd you know they wouldn't kill you?"

Soap shrugged sheepishly, too fatigued to answer properly, and the two men scowled at him and renewed their fierce, albeit gentle reprimands.

Simon seemed content to sit quietly by his bedside while the others scolded and praised him in equal measure, but that was likely because he'd spent every other minute of their shared dreams furiously chastising him enough for his own liking.

When he was finally left alone with only Simon, Soap weakly scrambled up against his pillows and battered his lashes at him in silent question. Simon leaned forward in his chair and tentatively wrapped an arm around Soap's swaddled body.

With his still broken fingers entombed in a cast and useless in his lap, Soap peppered slow kisses to Simon's face. "Missed you and your pretty mug," he whispered between loud, sloppy pecks. Simon's shoulders shook with repressed laughter, and he rested his head on Soap's forehead.

A choked sob slipped, ragged and raw from Simon's throat, and Soap faltered.

Not laughing.

“Simon?” He mumbled tentatively.

Simon pulled away, blinking his eyes with a grimace, lashes glistening with unshed tears. He shook his head, seemingly unable to get the words out, and Soap dipped into their shared connection gingerly.

Soap looking so diminished in a hospital bed, and seeing his injuries in the flesh illustrated to Simon just how close he’d been to losing him.

You didn’t, Soap reminded, and Simon exhaled raggedly.

“They wouldn’t let me see you,” Simon mumbled, stroking his arm absently. “Even with this.” He flashed his soulmark with downturned lips.

“Is that why you’re worried about marriage?” Soap asked, as understanding dawned on him.

Simon shuddered, that old instability in his heart threatening to swallow him whole. He cradled Soap’s face, eyes wild and distraught. “I promise, Johnny,” he said haltingly as his voice shook. “I’ll take care of you this time-”

His face crumpled, all of his exhausted agitation splitting him wide open after days of holding himself together.

It’s alright, Simon, he whispered, feeling his own eyes well up.

Simon thumbed Soap’s cheeks, eyes squeezed shut as he tried to get ahold of himself. “They can’t keep you from me,” he whispered hoarsely. “Have to prove you’re mine.” His swollen, wet eyes met Soap’s, and he sucked in a shaky breath.

Soap pressed his mouth to Simon’s head, eyes slipping closed as the other man sagged into his chest.

He could feel himself falling asleep with his warmth blanketing him, and he blinked his eyes open furiously.

“Are we going on the run, then?” Soap asked gamely into his hair. “Vegas wedding?”

Simon perked up, and his familiar smug smile sent a shockwave of adoration through Soap.

There you are.

"I have a venue." Simon scrubbed the tears from his cheeks, then paused, his face turning solemn. "I don't think we can go back to the UK, not for a while, anyway."

Soap was entirely unsurprised. With Miles gone, he was sure the authorities would be keen to lock them up and throw away the key, deal be damned.

"The French are willing to let us stay," Simon mumbled around a tiny smile. "Laswell's been pulling some strings. Your little manoeuvre helped them wipe out the largest Al-Qatala cell in Europe."

Oh, Soap thought dopily, falling back into his pillow heavily. *That's good.*

Simon's eyes were terribly amused despite the dried tears streaking his cheeks.

Pretty man.

"Where are we gonna stay?" Soap yawned.

In Simon's mind, a tiny French villa, old and rundown but resplendent in sunlight drifted through their connection.

You've been busy, Soap wondered in sleepy surprise. *Murder and real estate too, Simon? You're the whole package.*

Simon sighed, long suffering and fond, but the satisfaction of impressing Soap flipped, jovial and light into his mind.

Needs some work, Simon murmured. *But it could be...*

"Home," Soap whispered back.

It's only after several weeks that Soap is tentatively free to leave hospital, yet he'd not been saved from permanent damage.

The breaks in his fingers would heal with time, but the cut that fucker Theo had made to his leg had almost damaged his nerves beyond repair. Soap had a lifetime of chronic weakness, cramping and poor balance to look forward to.

Simon sat by his bedside and held his hand as they told him the news, a silent and steady anchor as his reality was gently upturned.

It wasn't like he expected he'd be able to serve with Simon after all

that had occurred, but he mourned the loss of ability, a silent door closing on a path he could never open again.

In another life, he knew he would've loved to have fought by his side.

+

Months later.

Home was a villa on the outskirts of a French village, a slow and lazy sort of change of pace from prisons, death and warfare. Despite that, they fell into their new life with an ease that surprised them both, the joy of simply being alive together superseding any initial teething problems.

Simon's French was quite terrible, and despite the fact that most locals could speak English, they opted to barrage him with rapid French whenever he showed his face, endlessly amused by his gruff, pitiful attempts at communication.

They politely switched to English when Soap was around, even though he was becoming quite proficient at casually conversing in the language.

"You can understand them better than I can," Simon grumbled as they slowly made their way home on foot. "Why do they speak English for you?"

"They just like me better." Grinning, Soap cooed, patting his arm condescendingly, "Poor Si-mon chéri."

Simon muttered, "Don't call me that." Soap curled his arm into his elbow, fluttering his eyes up at him knowingly.

In his mind, Simon growled, *Don't you dare stop.*

Soap smirked. *Wasn't going to, mo ghràdh.*

His overall air of smug superiority abated when midway home, Soap's bad leg gave out, and he went hurtling towards the hard ground, until Simon heroically dropped the groceries and scrambled to catch him.

"Just like our wedding day," Soap said breathlessly on his back, wrapped in Simon's arms mere inches from the ground. Simon sighed at the reminder, gently pulling him upright as Soap clutched hard onto his shoulders.

Theodore's final parting gift had cut through the nerves in his leg, and although the emergency surgery conducted had helped immensely, he'd been occasionally struck with uncontrollable numbness that took his leg out from under him.

The tiny wedding ceremony they'd held in their garden had almost ended disastrously, when before the eyes of the team, Laswell and her wife, and a smattering of new French neighbours, Soap had collapsed part way through their first dance.

Simon had held him upright against his body when Soap insisted the show go on, swaying lightly in time with the music until the song was over.

"Swooning," Simon had whispered smugly into his ear, curling an arm around his back as Soap clung to him desperately.

After months of him falling, though, Simon was far less smug, and far more worried.

"Need to buy a car," Simon grumbled, and Soap pouted by rote.

It was an old argument by now, but Soap was starting to come around to the idea. He thought it was a waste, given they were within walking distance of the town hub, and had nowhere else they ever needed to travel to.

But Simon's mind drifted to darker, paranoid shores, fearing the day someone would come to shatter their perfect life, and wanting to ensure he had the tools available to keep them both safe.

You're a terrible driver, Soap reminded him helpfully, as he leaned down to retrieve the discarded groceries.

Simon glared at him, quickly retrieving their goods and steadying him before he could topple over again.

You've never even seen me drive, Simon growled, but Soap shrugged, allowing himself to be pulled into his side as they fell into a snail's pace once again.

Call it my prison wifely intuition. As anticipated, Simon's eyes darkened into a hungry smoulder, all thoughts of arguing flying out the window.

"Caveman," Soap needled. "All of those straight romances have made

you daft.”

Simon’s lips turned down. “Isn’t your therapist making you write?” He asked sullenly. “You could write me something?”

“I’m not writing fiction, Simon.” Soap rolled his eyes. “I wouldn’t even know how.”

I’m sure you could do better than the drivel I read now, Simon added hopefully, and Soap scowled even as his lips threatened to twitch up.

Damning me with faint praise, Soap thought wryly.

“That’s not the compliment you think it is,” he laughed despite himself.

They walked in silence for a time, until they finally crested the hill, and their charming stone home swept into view.

Soap nudged his side, looking at their home with a beaming smile.

Only been a few months, Soap noted slyly. *And we’re already bickering like an old married couple.*

Simon’s gaze softened, and he pulled Soap inside with a tiny little smile.

+

The two story dwelling was surprisingly spacious, given that it was originally a safehouse belonging to French Intelligence that they’d graciously sold to Simon for next to nothing.

Their hatred of Miles, and appreciation for Soap’s work in the Al-Qatala chateau had apparently endeared them to the French authorities greatly. That they were both previously imprisoned for murder didn’t seem to phase them overly much.

Keeping them out of the UK authorities’ snare also sweetened the deal somewhat too. After everything Miles had done to jeopardise their intelligence work, they were more than happy to step on their UK equivalent’s toes for as long as foreseeably possible.

When they’d first arrived at the airy house, it had needed quite a bit of work - the floorboards were completely rotted through, fixtures in dire need of repair, and the tiles falling off the walls in the bathroom. Despite that, Simon had quietly worked, day and night until the

dwelling felt almost brand new.

Soap had tried to offer his assistance, but doped up on painkillers with nearly every bone in his hand still mending, alongside his frail leg, Simon had wordlessly glared at him until he toddled back to bed.

The main bedroom being upstairs had been an issue with Soap's leg, and he'd jokingly suggested installing a chairlift, until Simon decided he'd cut out the middleman and carry him up if he needed it.

"What are we gonna do when we're old, daft man," Soap would whisper into his neck, arms curled loosely around his neck.

Simon would shrug. "Put the bed downstairs before you put my back out, I imagine."

Now, the house was so well put together and idyllic that Soap almost felt a little guilty at living so lavishly, but his therapist had been working to free him of those corrosive emotions.

It was slow going, but the writing certainly helped.

Unbeknownst to Simon, he had taken up writing fiction here and there in secret once he had some use of his hands, and was determined to reward him for working so hard making a home for them both.

Rather than tell Simon about it though, he created a pen name, self published it to a popular ebook hosting site, and waited.

If gay soulmate stories were as rare as he said, Soap decided it'd only be a matter of time until he found it. When he received some polite commendations from anonymous readers, he wrote even more, certain that Simon would stumble across one of them eventually.

Even though he'd written it for Simon, he felt inexplicably embarrassed to show it to him directly. He hid it away in a corner of his mind, and half hoped that Simon would enjoy it without ever making the connection.

+

"Johnny!"

Ghost stalked through the house in search of his soulmate, and found him tinkering with an old, antique looking clock at the dining room table, his brow pinched as though disarming a particularly irksome

bomb, and not ancient clockwork.

Johnny blinked up at him in question, a screwdriver dangling from his lips.

He waved his reading tablet at him urgently, and Johnny plucked the tool from his mouth with a smirk. He wordlessly allowed Ghost to pull him to the living room, collapsing heavily by his side onto the couch as Ghost pulled up his story.

“Why are you only in your pants?” Johnny sounded tickled by the observation.

Ghost didn’t deign to answer. He knew full well why, at this point.

His favourite author had added a new instalment to his ebook catalogue, and aside from Johnny himself, this writer seemed to know every trope and word to set his blood perfectly alight.

That he had a husband so inclined to roleplaying every sordid little fantasy on the screen only made a new upload that much more exciting.

“New story?” Johnny asked mildly, as he closed his eyes and plopped his feet on Ghost’s lap, content to listen as he read aloud.

Ghost hummed and stroked his ankle with one hand as he read.

Jean Michel arrived at La Santé Prison, an impressive old dark stone building laid out in a hub and spoke design - a miserable feat of architecture straight out of 19th century Paris.

The intake process was quick and perfunctory, and he was stripped of all personal possessions and dignity in no time flat. The dehumanisation was so much like parts of military life, it almost felt like home.

Unlike the military, however, they did not seem at all interested by the faded, dormant soulmark on the palm of his left hand, and curiously did not note it down under his medical notes...

As Ghost read, he had the oddest sense of recognition tingling in his brain, but he dismissed the thought and eagerly continued.

Jean spent his first night in prison wide awake, staring at the underside of the top bunk, a yawning horror growing wide in his insides. He was gripped by a strange sickening feeling, and eventually turned and huddled with his

back to the wall, staring sightlessly into the flickering dark.

When the masked man in black slipped from the top bunk and crawled into his bed, he remained frozen with uncertainty, wide eyed as the hulking monster of a man quickly caged him beneath his arms.

“Bonjour, Jean,” he whispered huskily, pinning Jean’s hands to the mattress. He thumbed at his palm until his fingers unfurled, his dormant mark exposed to his masked gaze. “I’ve waited a long time for you, mon doux.”

When Jean’s mark erupted in a lightning bolt of silver, illuminating the masked man’s fathomless, hungry eyes, he whispered out, “Fantôme?”

“Johnny.” Ghost said slowly. “This is...”

“Familiar?”

Ghost blinked, and on the floor between his legs, Johnny sat caressing his open thighs with an indulgent smirk on his face, blue eyes twinkling mischievously. So absorbed with the book, he hadn’t even noticed him move from the couch to the floor.

Did you write this? A warm buzz of excited adoration flitted through his veins.

Kissing his knee, Johnny simply murmured, “Keep reading.”

Of course it’s you. Ghost laughed, sick with adoration, *When did you even do this?*

Johnny was too busy pressing soft, suctioning kisses up his thighs to bother answering.

Fantôme laughed darkly, tugging his gloves off between his teeth and revealing his matching soulmark to Jean’s astonished eyes.

“How,” Jean said in wonder. “I thought you hated us?”

So perplexed by this baffling discovery, Jean was totally unprepared when rather than answer, Fantôme simply curled his silvery palm around Jean’s own, humming in victory when he cried out, too slow to stop the formation of the soulbond.

Ghost wordlessly raised his hips, allowing his pants to be shucked off without a care as his hard cock bobbed in the air before Johnny’s ravenous gaze.

“What are you doing?” Jean whispered, as a warm shadow crept into his mind, curling around his brain like he belonged there.

He didn’t even know this man, hadn’t even seen his face, and he’d snuck into his bed and taken his soul like it was nothing.

‘It’s not nothing,’ Fantôme’s voice whispered roughly in his mind. ‘It’s mine.’

Fantôme parted his legs and slipped his naked hand around Jean’s already hard and leaking cock, laughing at his shamed noise of surprise. “So wet,” he purred. “Do you want more, mon doux?”

Johnny was sucking at every inch of naked skin near Ghost’s dripping cock, massaging the joins of his thighs and groyne soothingly as he lapped teasingly around the area.

Overwhelmed, Jean whispered, “Yes, oui,” and Fantôme fisted his dark hair harshly as he set a slow, torturous glide of his fist up and down his cock.

Johnny licked his palm and finally wrapped his soulmark around Ghost’s cock, setting a similarly aching pace as he clenched his abdomen rhythmically.

When Fantôme increased his pace, eager to see Jean crumble apart beneath him, it didn’t take long for him to cry out wantonly, uncaring for their neighbouring cell as he pulsed thickly into his soulmate’s clever hands.

Meanwhile Johnny kept his pace sedate, wrapping his lips around the underside and chasing every drop of leaking pre-come with his twining tongue.

“Johnny,” Ghost moaned, petting his hair while he struggled to keep his eyes on the screen.

Fantôme snickered as he scooped up the mess from his softening cock, ripping his pants from his body with little fanfare and pressing the gooey mess to his untouched entrance.

“Fantôme,” Jean moaned in surprise, widening his legs eagerly even as fear gripped his heart. He welcomed the digits inside him with a sharp gasp, cringing when his soulmate swiftly found his prostate and gently stroked it.

“Too much,” he whispered softly, even as he rocked onto his fingers and stroked the planes of his black mask. Not heeding his protests, Fantôme

pressed against that nub inside him again, and again, until Jean was a mindless, whimpering mess beneath him.

Below him, Johnny slid his hand down to the root of his cock and slipped his spit-shined lips over his head, slowly sinking downward.

Johnny, love, he thought, averting his eyes from his tablet to look at his greedy little husband. *If you don't finish me by the time I'm done reading this*. Ghost twined his hands into a fist in his hair and gently forced his cock into the back of his throat.

Johnny obediently remained still, stroking Ghost's thighs as he waited.

Eyes lidded, with his mouth stuffed full of his cock, Ghost once again wondered what he'd done to deserve him, lovely and as hungry as he was, but so adoring for a monster like himself.

With a cock to match, Johnny added cheerily and Ghost sighed.

Setting his thighs on Johnny's shoulders, he lied back and watched Johnny pull his mouth off in one long, sucking pull, the skin of his cock pulled tight and shining with spit, with a white string connecting his reddened lips to his tip.

"If you don't finish me by then, I'll be coming on that greedy little face and you'll be getting nothing," Ghost murmured, smirking at his conflicted, hungry face.

"Off you go then, love," Ghost ordered, diverting his eyes to the screen once more, and Johnny sucked him down with a choked, sloppy moan.

When Fantôme sank into his hole, he didn't stop until he was buried to the hilt, splitting Jean wide open on his cock. "Oh," he moaned, wriggling at the overwhelming sensation of perfect fullness, his insides gently clenching around the intrusion as he slowly adjusted.

"You didn't even try to fight this," Fantôme whispered, coiling an arm around Jean's back as he set a luxurious pace. When he bumped his prostate with the tip of his cock, Jean's eyes rolled back as he clung, trapped between pleasure and agony beneath him.

"You don't know my name-." He tipped his hips up.

"My face." He pressed their marks together, and met Jean's watering,

mortified eyes.

“But you let me slip into your bed and fuck your tight little hole anyway,” he sang sweetly into his ear, hushing him when Jean whined in mortification, his renewed cock spilling a hot line of white over his clothed stomach-

“Too late,” Ghost growled, throwing the tablet to his side and gently pulling Johnny off his cock by the hair.

“What?” Johnny cried out hoarsely in outrage. “You’re still reading.”

Fisting his hair, he tugged Johnny’s head until his scowling face was inches from his tip as he stroked himself steadily, panting harshly as his orgasm roared to the surface.

“Can’t,” Ghost bit out, voice raw with desperation, and Johnny’s outraged eyes turned molten as his desire for Ghost’s pleasure won out over his sense of justice. Ghost stroked his cheek in gratitude, just as Johnny’s mouth opened in preparation.

Lovely Johnny, he praised, and Johnny’s expression softened, making for a beautiful canvas when he finally painted his face with come. Ghost moaned raggedly as his slit roped hot and thick lines across his cheeks, forehead and chin, until he finally weakly dribbled out the last glob into his open mouth.

Johnny wrapped his lips around his head with a muffled little moan, eyes closed in rapture as he sucked hard, intent to milk him for every last drop.

Ghost slumped against the couch and petted his hair, enduring his oversensitivity to luxuriate in the sight of Johnny on his knees, idly worshipping his softening cock, his face dripping with his cooling spend.

When he finally pulled off, he blinked up at Ghost sluggishly, and he could feel the blank, mindless bliss emanating from the other man’s mind.

Enjoy yourself? Ghost observed with no small amount of amusement as he fingered a pearly strand ready to drip from his chin.

Looking at Johnny, blissed out and content with his come trailing down into the bristles of his shadowed jaw, despite receiving nothing in return, was too much for Ghost to resist.

He cupped his face and licked a hot swathe from his chin to his cheek, smiling when Johnny startled in his arms. He collected every stray drop of his own come onto his tongue until he was licked clean, and when he was satisfied, pressed his mouth to Johnny's and swept his load against his lips.

Johnny moaned, leaning into the kiss and greedily parting his mouth, lazily sweeping his tongue inside to seek out every last drop.

Clarty man, Johnny whispered, eyes slipping closed as he obediently swallowed it all.

Ghost just murmured against his swollen mouth, "I love you," and felt Johnny sink even further into delirium.

+

When Simon's painting supplies arrived, he wasted no time marching outside, tinkering about with soft fabrics and pillows under their olive tree with an adorable frown etched onto his face.

From the study, Soap watched it all with a puzzled brow, until after almost an hour of grumpy fussing, Simon unerringly turned to the window and waved him out.

Soap stepped out into the sun, noted the easel and canvas angled towards the tree, where a sumptuous bed of pillows and blankets lied in wait, and gave him a shark-like grin.

"Plein air, Simon?" He laughed, slipping off his shirt without being asked and tossing it to the grass. "Are you finally going to paint me like one of your-"

He was pulled into a fierce kiss, embarrassment coiling through their shared bond, before Simon pulled away. "Do you mind?" He asked lightly, eyes on his hands as he unbuttoned Soap's jeans.

Soap allowed himself to be stripped bare without protest, kissing his husband and scurrying away before he could get too handsy.

"What about the neighbours?" Soap stretched out shamelessly onto his makeshift bed of pillows and soft silk, smirking at the bowls of fresh, ripe fruit laid out artfully before him.

Simon's voice was tense as he muttered, "On holiday." He knelt before Soap, cheeks adorably aflame as he draped a scrap of fabric over

Soap's hips, concealing his privates neatly. "Behave, Johnny," he warned softly, stroking his cheek in parting. "Or you'll be punished."

Yes please, Soap purred, and behind the canvas, Simon stared glassily at him, before swallowing and brandishing his pencil.

Soap closed his eyes and listened to the sound of rough pencil scratches on canvas, dappled sunlight warming his skin as he fell into a light doze. He wouldn't cause trouble, not until Simon had what he needed.

When he was ready though, all bets were off.

He wasn't sure how much time had passed before Simon finally slipped into his mind, gently rousing him from his nap. *Sketch is nearly done*, Simon informed him idly, and Soap dipped into his mind, astonished at the amount of detail he'd captured in such a short time, until he was forcibly ejected.

Oi, Simon grouched. *It's not ready yet*.

"Looks like you've got everything you need from me, then," Soap called casually, plucking up a grape and popping it into his mouth guilelessly.

Don't go, Simon peered behind the canvas at him with a beseeching scowl. *And stop eating the props*.

Soap sent him a knowing look. *You just want me lying around naked, don't you?*

Yes, Simon admitted mildly, as he dipped his brush into his base colour.

"Perving on the model, Simon?" He sighed breathily, arching his back like a cat in the sun and parting his legs. When the silk fell from his hips, revealing his already filling cock, he smirked at Simon. "Oops."

Simon's eyes were darkening, his fresh paintbrush lax between his fingers as he worked his jaw.

Johnny...

Soap munched happily on his bounty of grapes, blindly reaching into his bowl and frowning when his fingers brushed a plastic bottle. He bent his head over, pushing aside the fruit and stopping short at the

bottle of lubricant hidden beneath it all.

He jerked his head up, but Simon had already soundlessly left his post, and was on him before he could even react.

“Jesus Christ,” Soap yelled as the bowl was upended, Simon pinning him heavily beneath his bulk.

Heart racing, he stared into his dangerous, lidded eyes with no small amount of terrified excitement.

“Disobedient,” Simon whispered, pressing his lips to his brow in a long, affectionate kiss, before pulling away just as soon as he arrived. Soap watched him as he sauntered back to his canvas, idly flipping the bottle of lube between his fingers and setting it with his supplies with a challenging smirk.

What, Soap thought, totally lost. *Come back*.

“No,” Simon said, picking up his brush again. Brush hovering over his canvas, he sent Soap a curiously impenetrable look, and added, “Get yourself ready.”

For...?

An image invaded his mind, of Simon bending his knees up to his shoulders and fucking him hard into his bed of pillows.

Soap smiled slowly, then frowned. *You just took the lube away*.

Oh, I did, didn't I, Simon replied innocently. *As much as you can without it*, he amended with a smug twitch of his mouth.

Soap stared blankly at him for a moment, before he settled into his makeshift bed with a shrug.

Simon studiously kept his eyes on the canvas whilst Soap spat crudely onto his soulmark and fingers, bending his stronger leg wide to flutter his digit across his hole. Licking his other hand, he wrapped it around his cock, and slowly worked a finger into his entrance.

Slowly stroking himself, he boldly stared at Simon's partially concealed form, but he remained unerringly focused on his painting. His side of the bond was oddly distant, evidently trying to ignore Soap.

You're only punishing yourself here, he called, but Simon remained

silent.

Eyes narrowing, he moaned softly at first, but as he increased his pace, decided he'd show him exactly what he was missing. Adding some of his pre-come to his other hand, he plunged two fingers into himself and threw his head back, vocalising his pleasure shamelessly.

It was whorish and loud, but he decided that was fine, since he had no smug, voyeuristic neighbouring cellmates to worry about.

"Simon," he gasped, breathy and plaintive, and Simon bristled, his paintbrush stilling tellingly.

"What are you doing?" Simon growled, poking his out from behind his canvas, cheekbones delightfully rosy.

He had his attention now, and he wasn't going to lose it to a painting now that he had it.

In lieu of a response, Soap whimpered, fluttering his eyes at him and biting his lip, and Simon's eyes lidded as though hypnotised. When his paintbrush fell out of his slack fingers, he smiled invitingly.

He didn't have nearly enough lubrication, so he gave up fingering himself and focused on stroking himself instead. Eyes slipping shut, he stroked his soulmark over his body, teasing the skin of his thighs and abdomen, groaning when his wedding ring brushed his nipple.

A hot flush of pleasure was tingling down his spine, and his lusty, vulgar moans were shamelessly gasped out of his mouth with every tight glide of his fist. Simon watched it all, eyes wild and hungry, and it was enough to take him there.

Biting his lip, Soap shuddered, gasping for breath as that feeling rocketed through his body, and he cried out his name -

A hand suddenly snatched at his wrist, and Simon's voice boomed in his mind, *Stop*.

Soap released himself with a gasp, body trembling and heart aflutter as he fought off his creeping orgasm.

"What are you doing?" Simon growled. Soap squinted at his sullen form where he knelt by his side, hand locked around Soap's wrist.

He licked his lips. "Tossing off," Soap said, voice deep and inviting.

Simon's eyes darkened. "Didn't say you could." He eyed Soap's furious looking cock for a long moment. "How is that getting you ready?"

It's your fault, Soap purred, and Simon's eyes snapped back to him. "You did take the lube away," he said meaningfully. "Gotta use something."

Simon crept between his open legs with a stormy, dangerous look in his eye. Stroking his knees, he parted them with a soft tsk. "My disobedient wife," Simon murmured, and Soap's cock jerked as the breath rushed out of him.

It was just a joke, he thought, strangled and mortified as Simon smirked knowingly. *Simon, you -*

"Should've worn a wedding dress." Simon suggested innocently, stroking his flanks warmly as Soap spluttered, unsure whether to laugh or scold him.

Leaning over him, he nosed at Soap's cheek, and slipped a few lubed fingers inside.

When did you do that? He wondered, eyes crossing as he twisted them all the way up to his last knuckle.

"Don't be daft," he groaned.

Simon sighed into his ear, "Shame, you make such a pretty wife."

God, fuck, he was going to come if he kept talking like that. And given his mind was an open book, Simon was well aware of that fact.

"Just fuck me already," Soap demanded, tugging at Simon's clothes impatiently. He pulled his fingers out with a roll of his eyes and batted his hands away.

Simon leaned away to leisurely undress himself, smirking at Soap's impatient squirming all the while. He squirted a generous dollop of lube onto his prick, then deposited blob directly onto Soap's hole.

"Oi," he hissed with a shivering moan. "Cold."

Pumping himself from tip to root, Simon slapped his heavy cock against his hole, warming him with his hot flesh. "Still cold?"

Writhing wildly, Soap hooked his good leg around his waist and tried to drive him in, but Simon grabbed both legs with a wicked gleam.

“None of that,” he chided, gently folding Soap’s body as he pressed down on his knees until they almost touched his shoulders, his hole unfurling as his body was stretched wide.

Simon stroked near the scar on the back of his knee. *Tell me if your leg hurts.*

Aye, yes, hurry up, Soap growled, then practically shrieked when Simon abruptly tilted his hips, his cock swiftly breaching him and dragging along his insides as he slowly sank to the hilt.

“What was that noise, Johnny?” Pelvis flush with his arse, Soap could feel his halting laughter as he looked at him with bright eyed astonishment.

Christ, he was beyond shame now, with him rearranging his insides so perfectly. Sensing his surrender, Simon easily rolled out and sank back in, and Soap marvelled at just how much deeper it felt, with his body bent in two.

Tightening his hands behind Soap’s knees, Simon fucked him with steady, forceful thrusts, his eyes roving from the sight of his stretched hole, to where Soap’s cock bounced with every punishing oscillation.

He moaned in bewilderment as Simon took his hands and placed them on his own knees, forcing him to hold himself wide as Simon rested his own palms on the blankets beneath them.

Locking their mouths together, Soap felt Simon’s overwhelming, possessive joy, at finally having Soap here, free and happy in the sun, bodies tangled in the shadow of the home they’d made together.

“Simon,” he moaned, touched by his sentimental, ridiculous husband.

Simon smiled, pulling out momentarily to show Soap in his mind just how stretched and sloppy he was, just how loose and depraved he looked on his back as he held himself perfectly wide for his cock.

He stuffed himself back inside with an appreciative grunt, and Soap was gone, almost wailing with every tight thrust, his bad leg going numb in his grip as his eyes rolled back. “That’s it,” Simon hissed. “Let me hear you.”

He didn’t hold back, crying out and writhing madly, his legs shaking as he struggled to keep himself open. He didn’t think he could stop the noises coming out if he tried.

And he certainly did not try.

"I lied, love," Simon suddenly whispered in his ear, pressing a sloppy kiss to his pulse and sucking hard.

"Hng, about what, mo ghràdh?" He moaned, ragged and high from his mouth as Simon ground into him, taking Soap's cock in hand and stroking him in time with his bouncing thrusts.

"The neighbours aren't on holiday," he whispered, his laughter jarring his cockhead inside of him as he pulled back to watch Soap's face twist in pleased horror.

Soap jerked his mortified face towards the fenceline, but Simon gripped his jaw and plundered his mouth with his tongue, nipping his lips like a man starved.

Bleeding Christ, why didn't you tell me? He tried not to cry out, but trapped beneath Simon's body, with his cock splitting him open and his scent overwhelming his nose, he couldn't help the keening wails spilling from his lips.

"Want everyone to hear you." Simon's eyes were dark, a glint of that old madness shining through as he watched Soap quiver on the edge of ecstasy. Slowing his hips to a rocking pace, Simon jerked his cock with in a slow, steady glide, and Soap writhed impotently, chest heaving as he moaned, higher and higher. "Hear that you're mine."

God, fuck, you already knew that, Simon.

"You'll never be taken from me again," he growled darkly, taking Soap's marked hand and stroking his tongue along the ridged, scarred flesh of his palm.

I'm gonna come, Soap said, eyes silently pleading for permission.

Simon smiled, a covetous and terrible sight, and firmly fluttered his slick thumb over his frenulum. *Go on, then.*

Back arching like a cable snap, Soap dropped his legs as he came, fucking his hips into Simon's tight fist as his insides pulsed steadily on his cock. Mouth wide open, he cried out like he was dying, clutching onto Simon's hand like a lifeline as his perception of his own mind and his soulmate's blurred dangerously.

"Fuck, that's it," Simon rumbled, burying himself to the hilt, eyes

never once leaving Soap as he fell apart. Shuddering violently, his cock continued twitching long after he'd spilled his last drop, his frantic heartbeat thumping in time with his clenching hole as he struggled to come down from his high.

He couldn't, when he felt Simon's approaching climax like it was his own.

"Simon?" He whispered, confused and lost, luxuriating in how he felt around Simon's cock, as his brain struggled to separate the sensations of his own body from his husband's. "Please, it's too much."

"You're alright, love" Simon breathed, blinking the hypnotised sheen from his eyes as he rocked inside of him again. "I'm here." He pressed lazy kisses to Soap's face, grounding him with his fathomless gaze as he took him steadily, his breath hitching as he raced towards his inevitable end.

Simon pulled out, eyes wild as he dragged his heavy length across his body and breathed his name, tilting his head back by the hair. Soap heard the slick squelch of Simon's hand as he stroked himself, then felt warmth splattering the skin of his exposed neck and collarbones, as he came in rhythmic lines over his body.

"Simon," he moaned, trying to free himself to catch it with his mouth, but the grip in his hair remained firm.

When he was done, Simon finally tilted his chin down, looking far too pleased with himself as he observed the mess he'd made.

"You wanted me to paint you," Simon said breathlessly, then grinned with a lightness Soap was wholly unprepared for.

Huffing, Soap smiled dreamily, resting an arm above his head as he caught his breath.

Simon thumbed his neck, collecting a glob of come and swiping it across Soap's bottom lip. "How do you like your pearl necklace, sweet wife?" He snickered as Soap shamelessly sucked on his lip.

"Come here and feel it for yourself," Soap said sweetly, hugging his arms around Simon and forcing him down on top of him.

Unperturbed by the mess, Simon settled down on top of him, kissing him languidly as he blindly twined their marked hands together.

When Soap realised Simon was stroking his thumb across their soulmark, up to his ring finger and back, he beamed at him, heart fit to burst at the utter absurdity of his other half.

Such a sook, Soap cooed, watching Simon's face redden tellingly. *Haven't lost your little virgin blush yet, Simon.*

Exhaling shakily, Simon tucked his head into the crook of Soap's neck and gently collapsed onto him, his mind locked in a spiral of relief and sleepy adoration as he cuddled into him.

Never thought I'd meet you, he thought quietly, and Soap tightened his arms around him. He felt a lifetime of yawning loneliness threaten to overwhelm him, and Soap nuzzled his hair, curling his legs around him in an attempt to remind him -

We're here now, Soap whispered, and Simon hummed, mind light as a feather as he basked in his arms, the sun's rays warm on his skin.

When he made no move to get up after several minutes, Soap gently shook him.

Simon? Soap asked, He swept a hand over his pale spine with amused uncertainty. *You're going to burn out here.*

Comfortable, Simon mumbled sleepily. *Wake me later, will you?*

Simon, he thought exasperatedly. When Simon didn't respond, his mind suspiciously blank as he dozed, Soap pouted at the canopy of the olive tree above him

After several minutes of silent sulking, he felt Simon smirk into his neck, and he squawked in outrage.

"I knew you were awake," Soap exclaimed, patting his back insistently. "Get off, then, you're huge."

Simon hummed smugly. "But you take me so well though, love."

Soap shivered as his cock twitched with interest. "Don't say things like that," he groaned. "It's too soon."

In reply, Simon quietly tangled their marks together and squeezed, and Soap relaxed, feeling safe and adored squashed beneath him.

He thought of how long his poor soulmate had been made to wait for him, and decided he could endure an armful of Simon for a short nap.

Soap crept his hand down and squeezed Simon's arse with a roguish smirk, watching a blush creep all the way from his shoulders up to his nape.

Even if he was ridiculously heavy.

Chapter End Notes

Missing from this epilogue of sorts is the copious amounts of therapy the two of them need and definitely get, but you can fill in the blanks for yourself there.

Don't be mad that I skipped the wedding, I still have good intentions to add a part 3 to Fairytale of Manchester and don't want to put all my wedding ideas here lmao.

Yes, Soap makes friend fiction for his husband / soulmate - forgive me if it's a bit of a meta nightmare haha. The initial passages are ripped from chapter 1 but given a Parisian coat of paint (La Santé Prison IS a real prison, the most famous one in Paris apparently, and if you look it up and compare it to Strangeways prison, they actually are laid out pretty similarly. I thought that was pretty neat)

This fic has been a labour of love and torture all at once. I rewrote chapter 1 at least 3x times, and had not really intended to continue beyond maybe a vague epilogue post-release, and it somehow became this plotty monster that's half the size of Target Locked ;-;

So hope you all enjoyed the end of Doing Time! Thanks for everyone's amazing support ^^

Translations

Mon chéri - My dear

Mon doux - My Sweet

Fantôme - Ghost

Jean - John

Clarity - dirty

Aye - yes

Works inspired by this one

[and they were cellmates](#) by [tildabeans](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!